

MARVEL

ANNIHILATION 2044





ANNIHILATION 2099



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"UNDEAD OR ALIVE!"**

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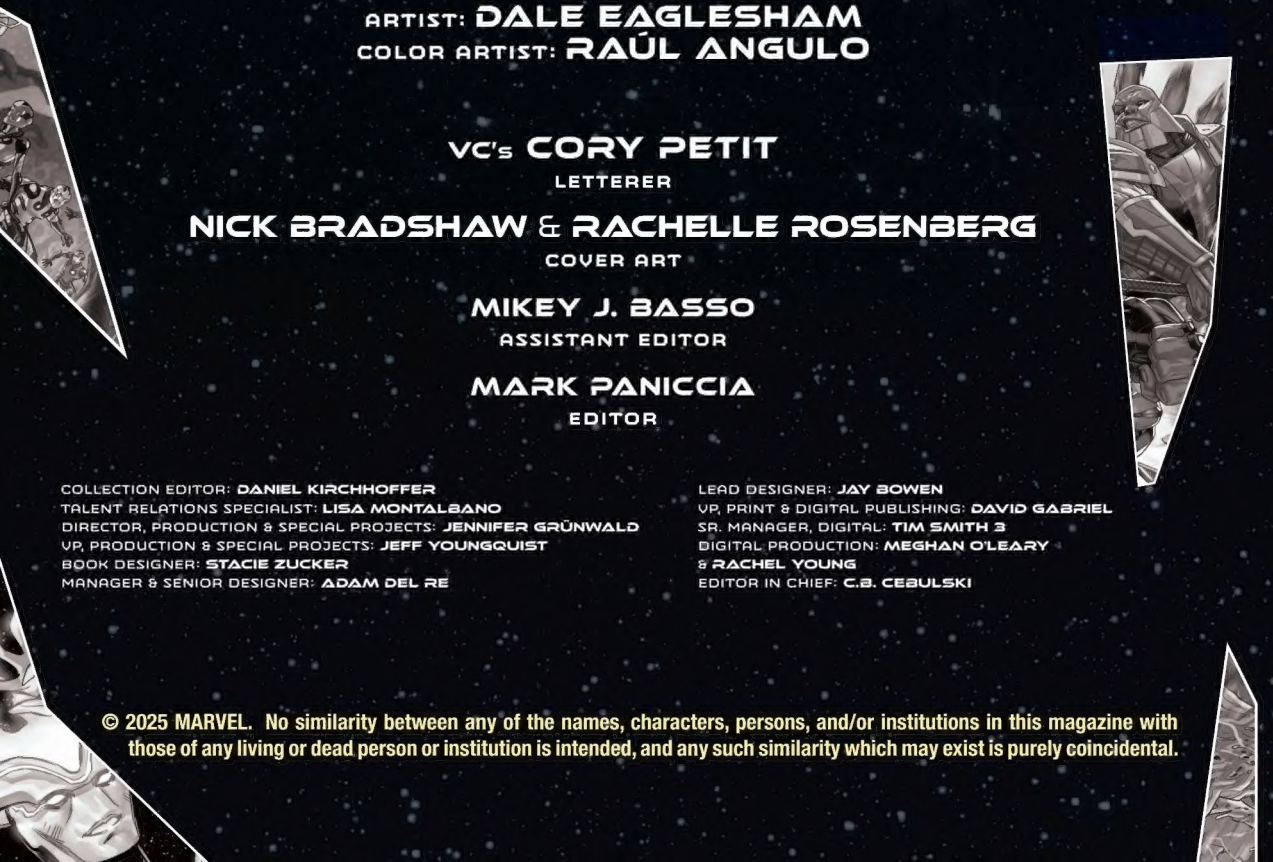
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ENCRYPTED INTERNET LOG
ACTIVE. NEUROSKELETAL
RECORDING ON. SUBJECT--
CODENAME: NOVA.

LATELY, XANDAR FEELS
LIKE A LIFETIME AGO.
AN' STILL TOO RECENT
TO FORGET.

AFTER THAT, 'BOUT
THE ONLY THING
LEFT WAS ME...ME
AN' THE CODE.

"PEACE AND ORDER AREN'T
THE NATURAL STATE OF
THINGS. THEY HAD TO BE
INVENTED, AND THEY HAVE TO
BE CONSTANTLY DEFENDED."

SPENT A LOT OF TIME
THINKIN' ON THOSE
WORDS, AN' FINALLY...

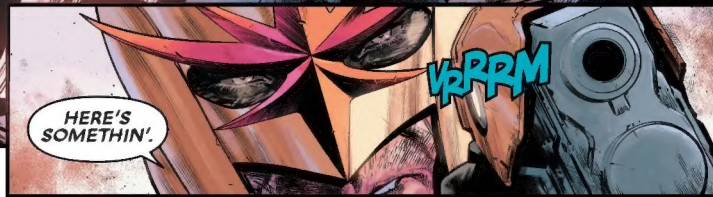


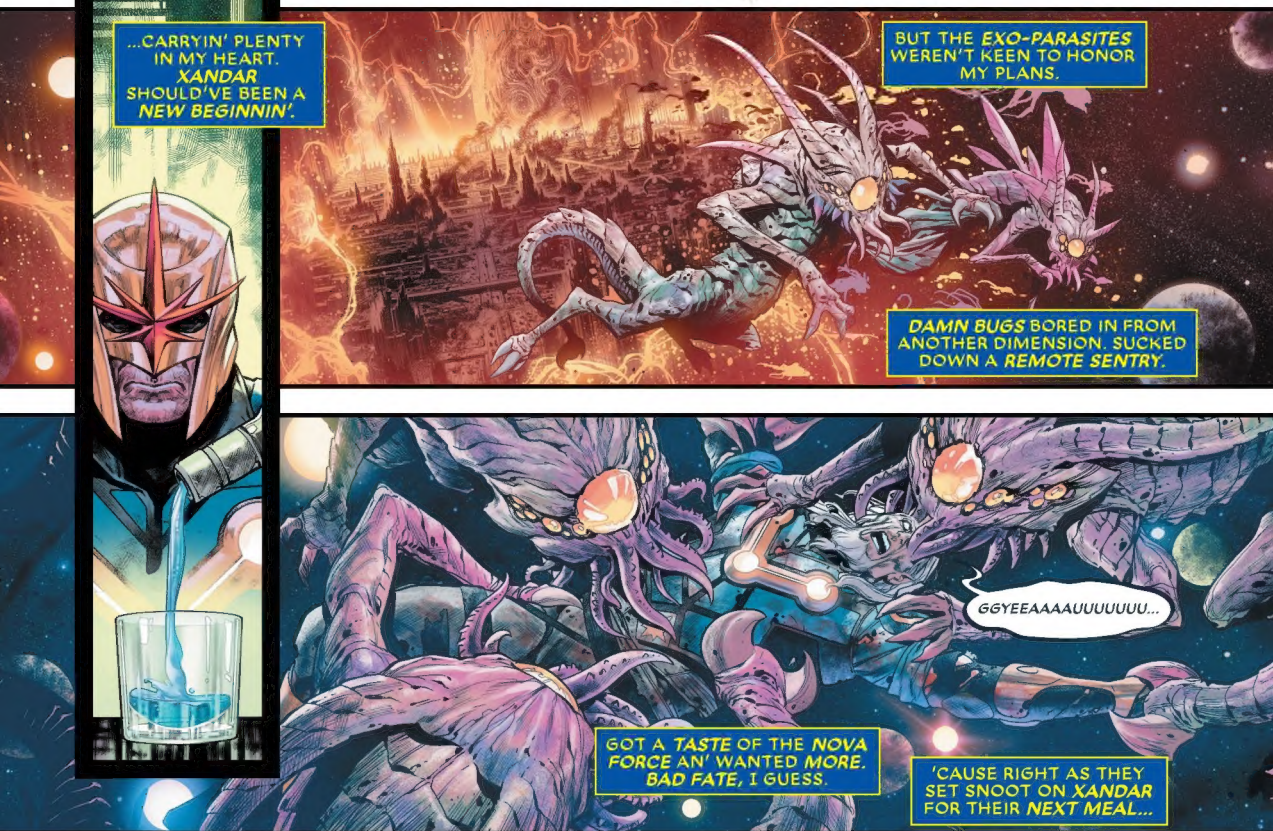
...FIGURED
I'D TAKE 'EM
ON THE ROAD.

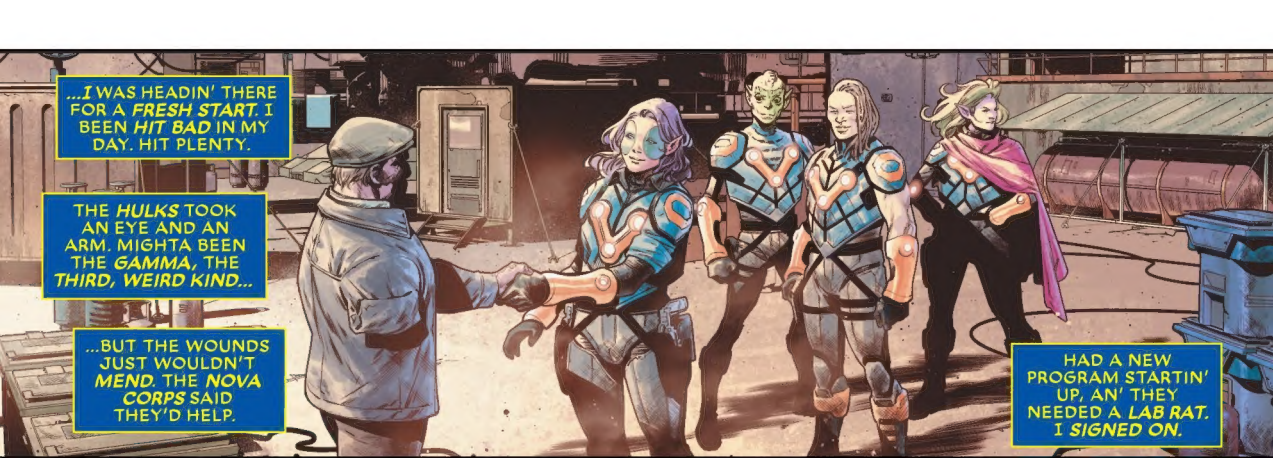
REALITY-2099. THE PLANET ORNN. THE TOWN OF SUREGASH.

GOT THE
FEELIN' THAT
AIN'T YOURS,
FRIEND.

SO WHAT,
COP? I KNOW
THAT SYMBOL--
THERE'S NOTHING
BACKING UP
THAT BADGE!





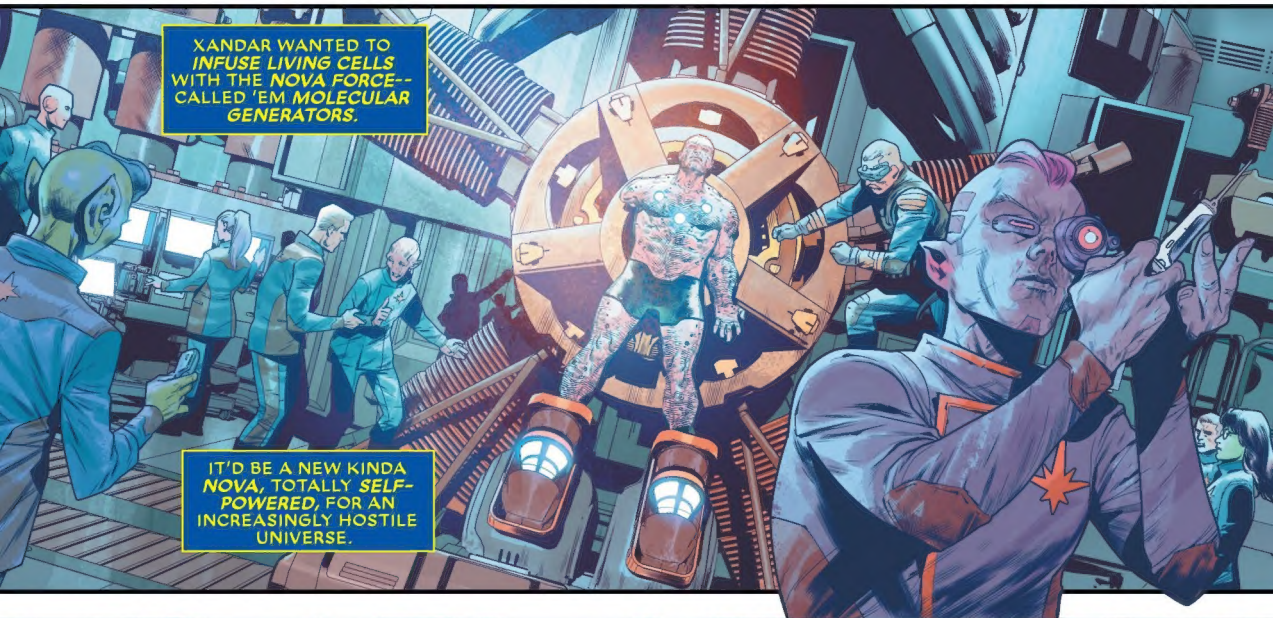


...I WAS HEADIN' THERE FOR A **FRESH START**. I BEEN **HIT BAD** IN MY DAY. **HIT PLENTY**.

THE **HULKS** TOOK AN EYE AND AN ARM. MIGHTA BEEN THE **GAMMA**, THE **THIRD**, **WEIRD KIND**...

...BUT THE WOUNDS JUST WOULDN'T **MEND**. THE **NOVA CORPS** SAID THEY'D **HELP**.

HAD A NEW PROGRAM **STARTIN'** UP, AN' THEY NEEDED A **LAB RAT**. I **SIGNED ON**.



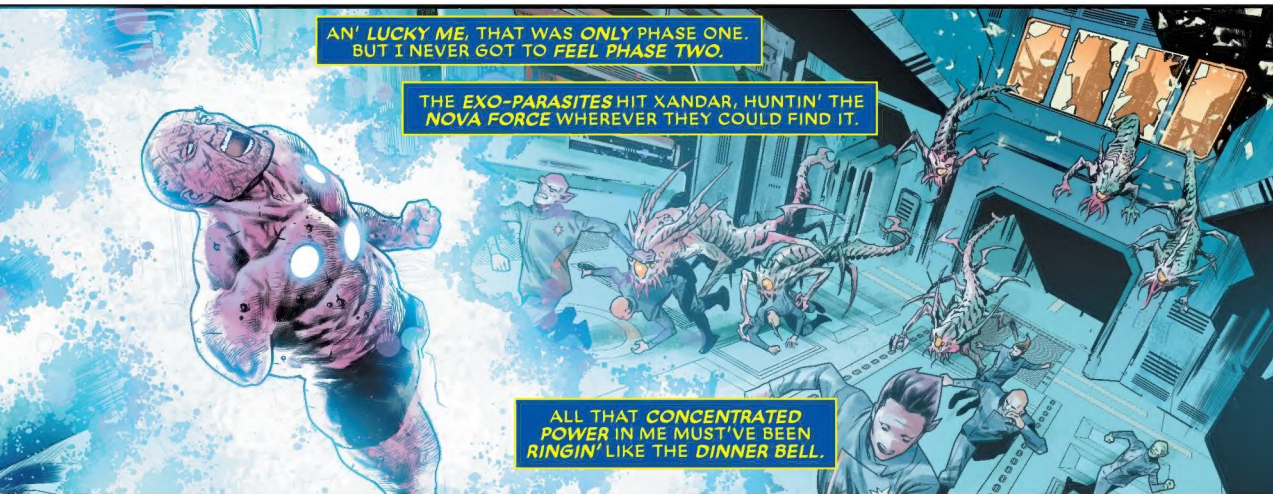
XANDAR WANTED TO **INFUSE LIVING CELLS** WITH THE **NOVA FORCE**--CALLED 'EM **MOLECULAR GENERATORS**.

IT'D BE A NEW KINDA **NOVA**, TOTALLY **SELF-POWERED**, FOR AN **INCREASINGLY HOSTILE** UNIVERSE.



AN' I'LL TELL YA, I **FELT** THE **POWER**. **AVERAGE PERSON'S** GOT **37 TRILLION CELLS**, RIGHT?

THE **SECOND** THEY HIT THAT **SWITCH**, I HAD **37 TRILLION TINY SUNS** UNDER MY **SKIN**.



AN' **LUCKY ME**, THAT WAS **ONLY PHASE ONE**. BUT I NEVER GOT TO **FEEL PHASE TWO**.

THE **EXO-PARASITES** HIT **XANDAR**, **HUNTIN'** THE **NOVA FORCE** WHEREVER THEY COULD **FIND IT**.

ALL THAT **CONCENTRATED POWER** IN ME MUST'VE BEEN **RINGIN'** LIKE THE **DINNER BELL**.

THEM BUGS
NEARLY GOT
THEIR FILL.



CAN'T LET
THAT GLASS
GO DRY.

MUCH
OBLIGED.
THAT'S SOME
MITT...



...BETTIN'
YOU DIDN'T LOSE IT IN A
BARTENDING ACCIDENT.



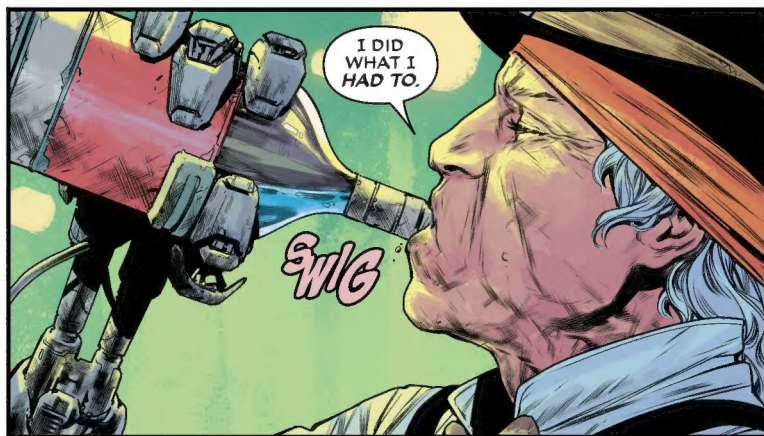
THIS? DAMN THING'S
VINTAGE. LOST THE
ORIGINAL WORKING
SECURITY ON A
FARM TRAIN.

LUNAR BANDITS--
GUESSING YOU
KNOW THE TYPE.
THEY LOST MORE
THAN THEIR
HANDS.



CHEERS.

CHEERS
NOTHING.



I DID
WHAT I
HAD TO.

SWIG



YEAH, WELL...
CHEERS ANYWAY,
LADY.

FOR
THE HELL
OF IT.

WE'VE ALL
DONE THINGS
WE HAD TO DO...



...LIKE I SAID, THE BUGS DIDN'T **QUITE** GET THEIR FILL, BUT THEY TRIED.

THEY INFECTED 'EM ALL. EVERY CITIZEN, EVERY CENTURIAN, EVERY DENARIAN, EVERY MILLENNIAN.

EVERY NOVA CORPSMAN. EVERY LIVING THING ON XANDAR...EXCEPT ME.

EXCEPT THE MEAL THEY WANTED MOST. THE MAN WITH THE NOVA FORCE IN HIS VEINS.

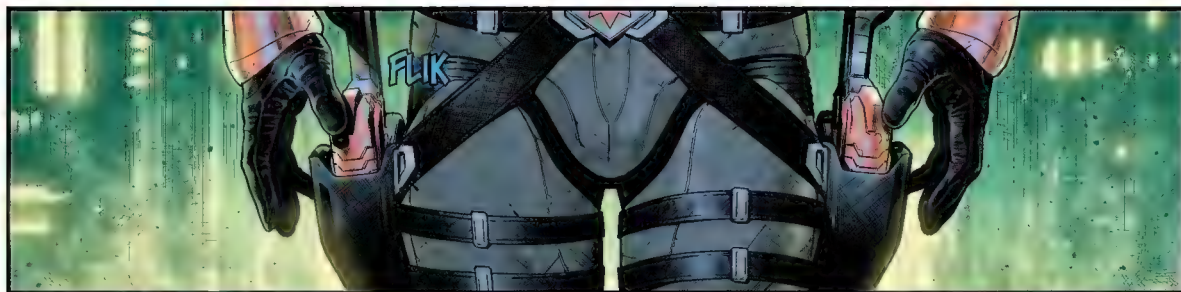
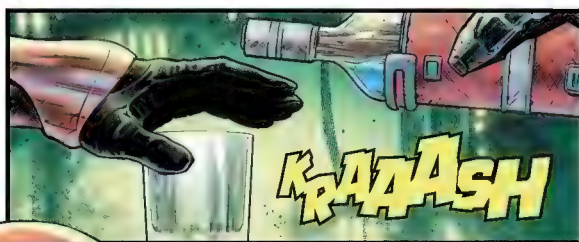
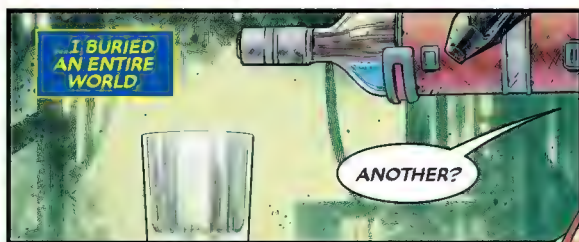
FIGURE MY KNACK FOR HEALIN'; JUICED BY THE NOVA FORCE, MADE ME HARD TO INFECT.

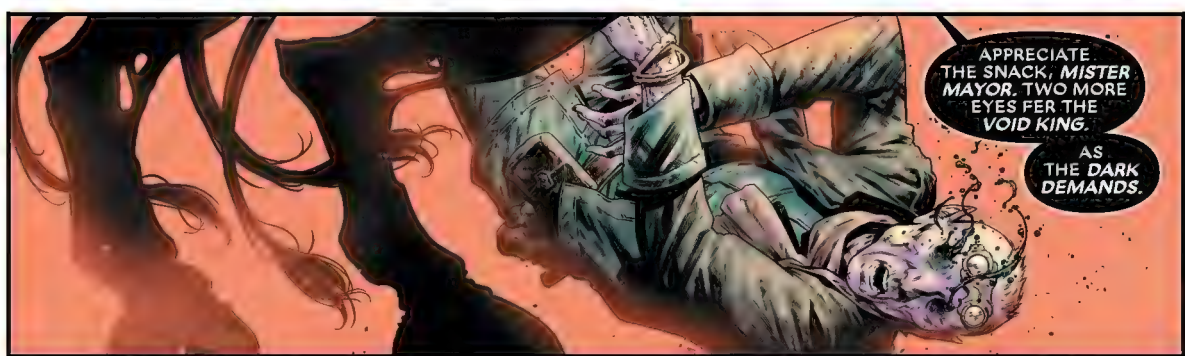


BUT I WAS ALONE IN THAT. AN' THE **INFECTION** COULDN'T BE ALLOWED TO SPREAD.

THE EXO-PARASITES HAD TO BE STOPPED. SO I DID WHAT I HAD TO, TO **EVERYONE** ON XANDAR.

TO SAVE THE GALAXY...

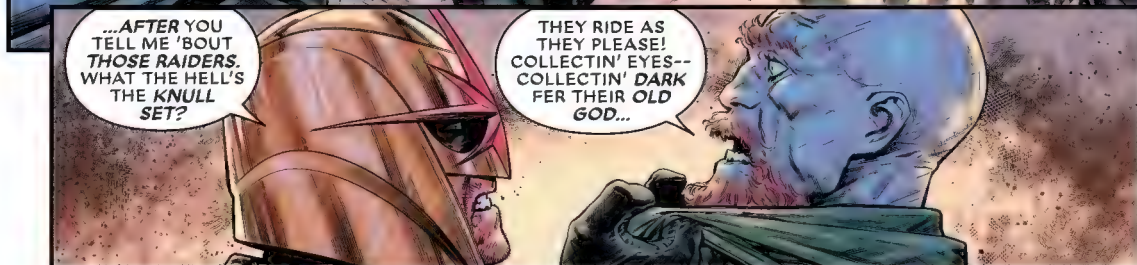






GAH! LEMME GO, YA MAD FOOL! LEMME GO AN' RUN!

THINK I'LL STAY. BUT YOU CAN RUN...



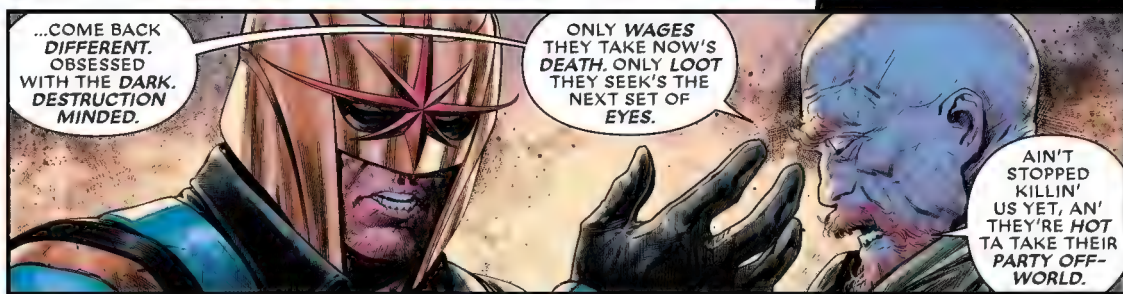
...AFTER YOU TELL ME 'BOUT THOSE RAIDERS. WHAT THE HELL'S THE KNULL SET?

THEY RIDE AS THEY PLEASE! COLLECTIN' EYES-- COLLECTIN' DARK FER THEIR OLD GOD...



"TIME WAS, THEY WERE LOCAL PROSPECTORS. THEM AN' THEIR CAPTAIN, MURK."

"ONE NIGHT, YEARS BACK, THEY RIDE OUT TO RECONNOITER A METEORITE..."



...COME BACK DIFFERENT. OBSESSED WITH THE DARK. DESTRUCTION MINDED.

ONLY WAGES THEY TAKE NOW'S DEATH. ONLY LOOT THEY SEEK'S THE NEXT SET OF EYES.

AIN'T STOPPED KILLIN' US YET, AN' THEY'RE HOT TA TAKE THEIR PARTY OFF-WORLD.

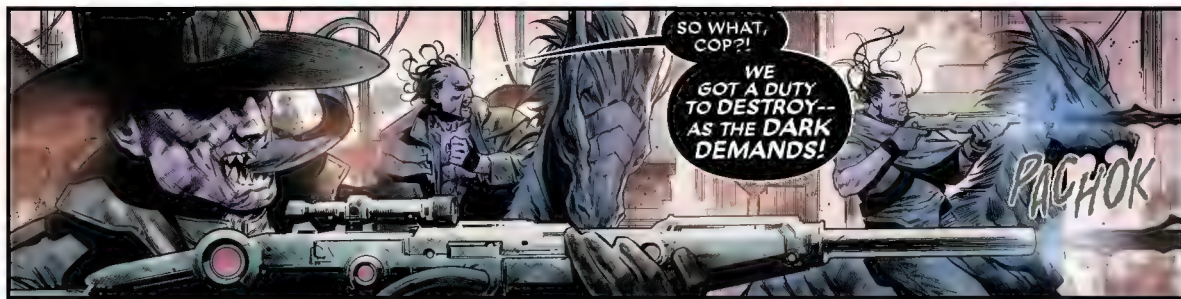


DAMN THIEVES...YER TRASH, NOTHIN' BUT...

HELL OF A MOUTH ON YA... BUT IT AIN'T YER GOB THE VOID KING WANTS.

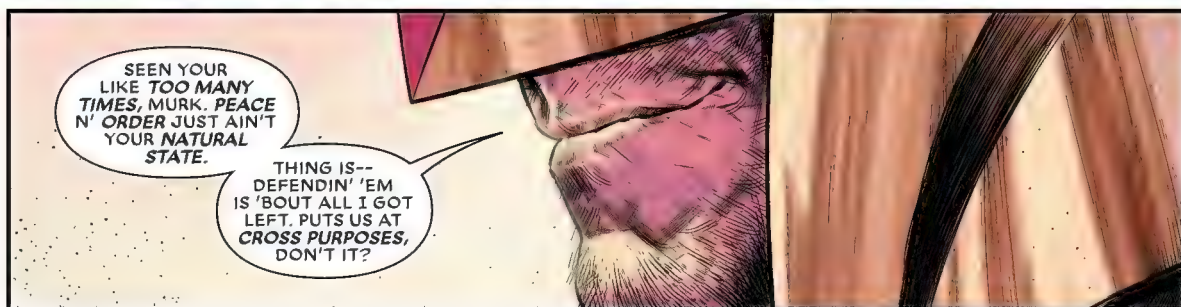
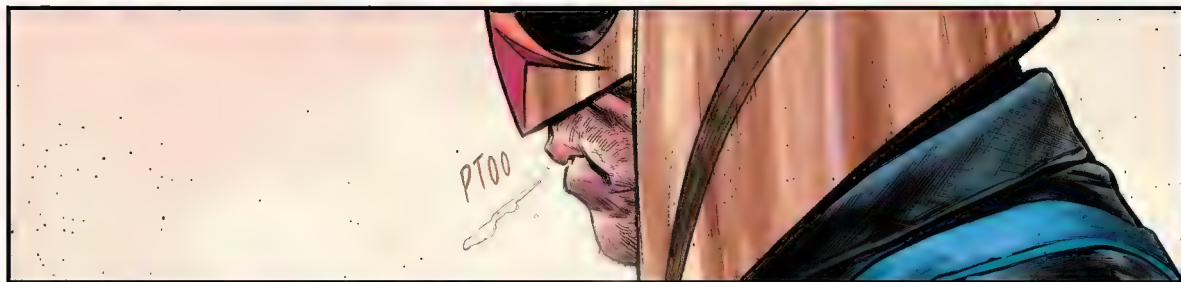
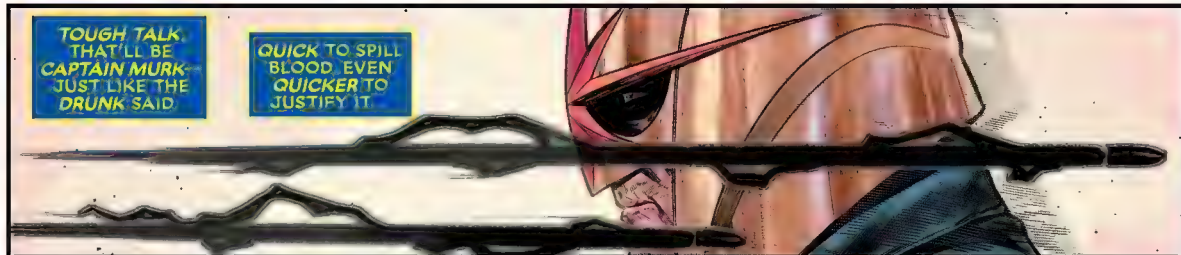
IT AIN'T
YER KING I'M
WORRIED ABOUT
PLEASIN'.

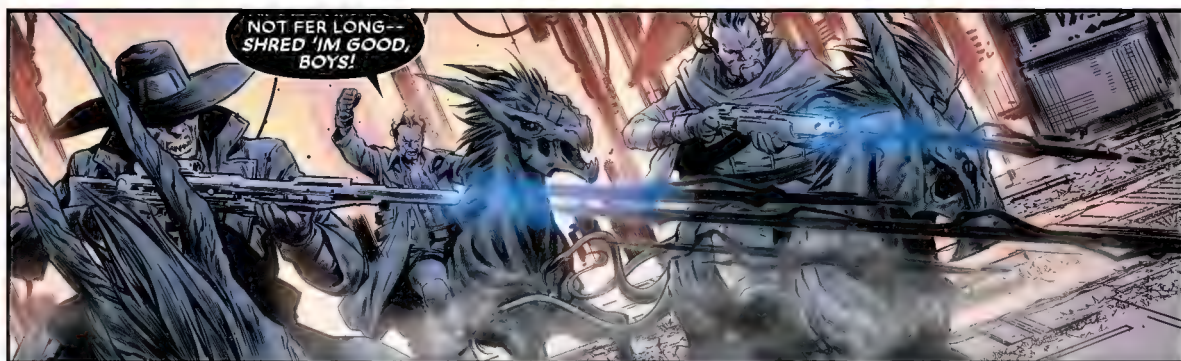




TOUGH TALK,
THAT'LL BE
CAPTAIN MURK--
JUST LIKE THE
DRUNK SAID.

QUICK TO SPILL
BLOOD, EVEN
QUICKER TO
JUSTIFY IT.



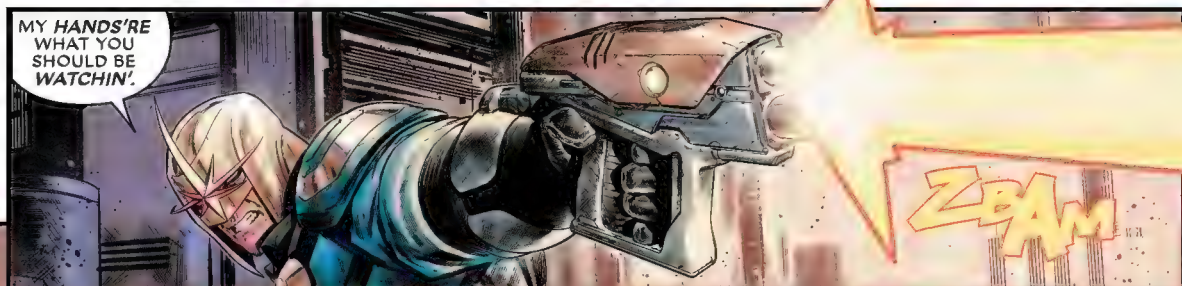




AS
THE DARK
DEMANDS!



FORGET
MY HEAD,
MURK.



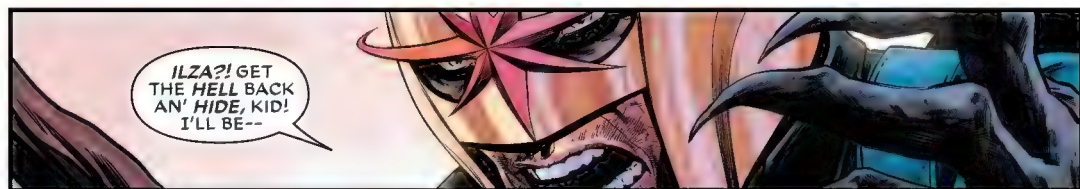
MY HANDS'RE
WHAT YOU
SHOULD BE
WATCHIN'.

NICE SHOT.
HURT BUT GOOD--
BUT HURT AIN'T KILLED.
SEE, I'M A TRUE
BELIEVER.

MY
GUNHANDS?
THEY PRAISED
THE CAUSE, THEY
DRESSED IN
DARK...









...THAT'S
HOW THE DARK
GETS IN!

UMPPHH!!!

"AN' IT ALWAYS
GETS IN. DIDN'T
TAKE LONG
FER ME, ME N'
MY CREW...

"...WE SET OUT TA
STAKE OUR CLAIM
ON SOME *PRECIOUS*
METALS FROM THE SKY.

"PRECIOUS ENOUGH
THAT SPLITTIN' *THREE*
WAYS WAS BETTER 'N FIVE.

"BUT IT WEREN'T NO
METEORITE. IT WAS
A *SYMBIOTE*. IT
CALLED TA US--TA ME.

"SAID WE'D BE
PRECIOUS.
WE'D BE VALUED
LIKE NO OTHER...

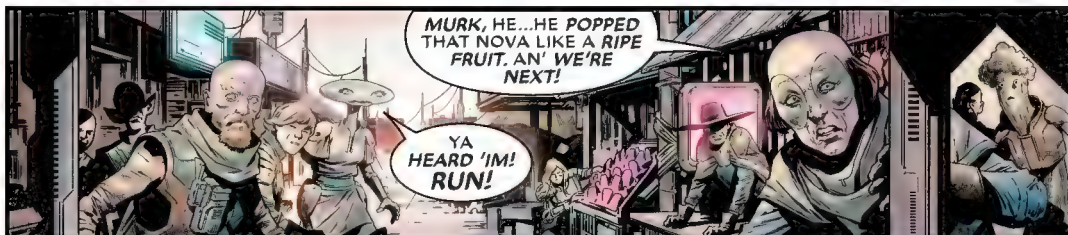
"...LONG AS WE
SPREAD THE WORD
'A *KNULL*. THE KING
OF DARKNESS.

"KNULL WAS
DEAD, BUT FAITH
LOVES A MARTYR.
AN' THAT *SYMBIOTE*
DUG IN DEEP.

"SINCE THAT DAY,
WE BEEN TURNIN'
OFF THE LIGHTS FOR
AS MANY AS WE CAN..."

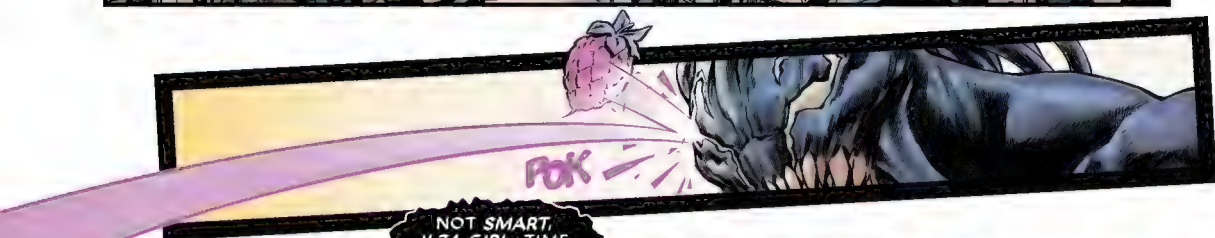


...AS
THE DARK
DEMANDS!



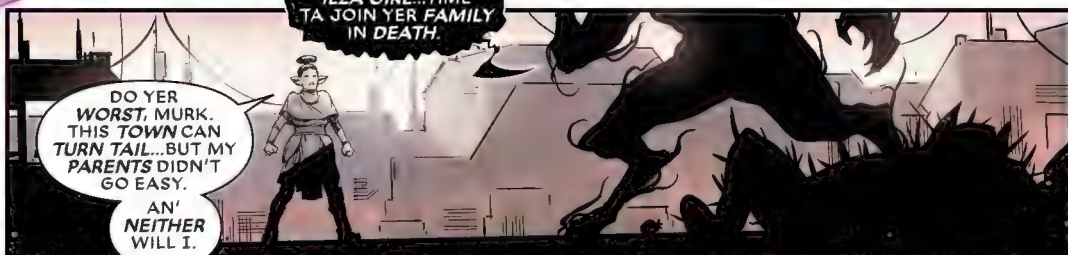
MURK, HE...HE POPPED
THAT NOVA LIKE A RIPE
FRUIT. AN' WE'RE
NEXT!

YA
HEARD 'IM!
RUN!



POK

NOT SMART,
ILZA GIRL...TIME
TA JOIN YER FAMILY
IN DEATH.



DO YER
WORST, MURK.
THIS TOWN CAN
TURN TAIL...BUT MY
PARENTS DIDN'T
GO EASY.

AN'
NEITHER
WILL I.



YOUR PARENTS
WENT SCREAMIN',
CRYIN', AN' DRIBBLIN'
DOWN THEIR LEGS.
THEY BEGGED...

...RIGHT TILL
THEY WENT DARK
ON ACCOUNT 'A ME
SUCKIN' OUT THEIR
BRAINS N' EYES.

FOLKS'RE
RIGHT TA FEAR
THE DARKNESS.
KID. AIN'T NOthin'
THAT CAN
STOP IT.



SNIKT



SNIKT





...FOLKS
CALLED ME
LOGAN.

I DO HATE WALKIN'
AWAY, BUT I GOT
TO BE MOVIN' ON.

AFTER ALL, THERE'S
NOT BUT ONE OF US
LEFT, ONE SOLDIER
WITH A HEAVY DOSE OF
BLOOD ON HIS HANDS.

ONE GUNHAND TO ROAM
THE STARS, INVENTIN'
PEACE N' ORDER WHERE
THERE'S NONE.

AN' WHEREVER THOSE
OLD-FASHIONED IDEAS
ARE FOUND?

ONE LAST
NOVA TO
DEFEND EM.

THE END.

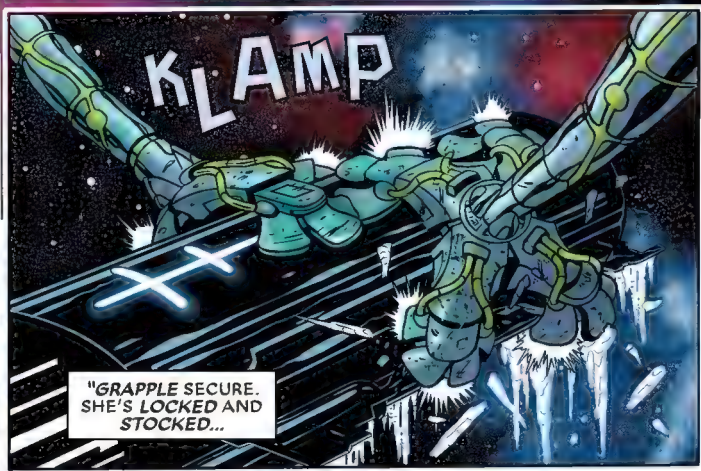
THE BARRENS.
DEEP SPACE



"DRACULA RISEN"
PART I



"DEBRIS IN
SIGHT, CAPTAIN.
OFF THE BOW."



"GRAPPLE SECURE.
SHE'S LOCKED AND
STOCKED..."

"...I'M REELING
HER IN."

NICE BIT
OF WRANGLIN',
BLOODEYE.

IF THERE'S
ANY LUCK IN THEM
STARS, THIS SCORE'LL
BUY US A FEW CYCLES
OF THE GOOD
LIFE.



CREW MANIFEST

APTAIN: SKRETCH.
FIRST MATE: PEILADJ.
RECOVERY: MOORN BLOODEYE.
NAVIGATION: YOBIDZA.
MECHANIC: K'DERN.

PORT OF CALL: GHOUL PLANET.
PORT OF CALL: ALL-SKRULLOS.
PORT OF CALL: MOORD.
PORT OF CALL: SAKAAR.
PORT OF CALL: PRAETOR-CHANDILAR.



SMELLS OLD.
SMELLS EXPENSIVE...
SMELLS LIKE SHE'S
WAITIN' TO BE
CRACKED OPEN.

SNUIRRREEFF

K'DERN.



MOST
ASSUREDLY,
CAPTAIN
SKRETCH.

JUST LET
ME WORK IN
THE ELECTRO-
WEDGE.
AND...

SHARRAK



GOD'S
LOINS--
GAH!

POOP



STOW THE
INVOCATIONS,
MOORN. YOU'RE
THE SCAVENGER--
WHAT'VE WE
GOT?

NOTHING
GOOD, CAPTAIN.
THIS CARGO HAS ALL
THE HALLMARKS OF
TROUBLE.



TROUBLE NETS US
DOUBLE. YOBIDZA--
WHERE'D THIS JETSAM
COME FROM?

FAR OFF.
THERE'S THE
WET-STONE STINK
OF DEAD MOON
ALL ABOUT THIS
ONE.

COULD BE
THE ORKASTRA
SYSTEM. COULD BE
SOL. MAYBE EVEN--



COULD BE
ANYWHERE,
SOUNDS LIKE.
OKAY, ONE
SIDE.

THE
CAPTAIN'S
TAKIN'
A LOOK FOR
HIMSELF--





--GET TO THE PANIC VALVE! LOCAL GRAVITY'S ALREADY GOT US!

SEAL THAT BREACH BEFORE WE CRASH! SOMEONE GET TO THE--



AGHD! WHAT ARE THESE BEASTS?!

EVERYWHERE-- THAT'S WHAT! AND THE VACUUM'S GOT NO HOLD ON THEM!



WAIT...WHY RETREAT? THEY HAD US--

HUAAAAAGH!

--OFF?

RETREAT? NO. THEY WERE CALLED. THEY RETURN TO THE HOME FLESH.

TO THE CURSED FORM OF THEIR MAKER. TO THE BLOOD AND BODY...



...OF
CRACULU



WHAT A
STRANGE PLACE
TO WAKE.
AND
UNREASONABLY
WINDY.



THERE.

SSSHUNT



HOW
NICE THAT
NATURE STILL
ACKNOWLEDGES
ITS MASTER.



AND WHAT
AN UNEXPECTED
TURN...

MY
DESTINATION
WAS SET--I AWAITED
A NEW CHAPTER.
AND YET...



...I SENSE NONE OF
MY KIND BELOW. I
FEEL NO OCEAN
TIDES OF
BLOOD.

THIS IS
NOT THE VAMPIRE
HOMELAND.



THIS RUSTIC
DIRTBALL
CANNOT BE DOMUS
DRACONUM.*

SO...I AM
LOST, THEN. I
AM FAR FROM
HOME.



BUT A
VAMPIRE IS
RARELY ALONE
FOR LONG. HEAR
MY WORDS IN
YOUR HEAD...

...ACCEPT
THE HIDDEN
VOICE OF OUR
PEOPLE. KNOW
THAT WE ARE
NOW KIN.

*SEE MIGUEL O'HARA - SPIDER-MAN 2099 #2
FOR DRACULA'S QUEST. --SPACE PIRATE PANICCIA



WELCOME
YOUR NEW
STATIONS...

MOORN
BLOODEYE OF
MOORD...NOW
GRAVEHUNTER,
CAPTAIN OF
THE RAID.

PEILADJ OF
ALL-SKRULLOS...
NOW DEATHFORM,
CAPTAIN OF
THE HUNT.

K'DERN
OF PRAETOR-
CHANDILAR...NOW
NIGHT FORGE,
CAPTAIN OF
THE SMITHY.

YOBIDZA
OF SAKAAR...NOW
KILLPATH, CAPTAIN
OF THE TRAIL.

EACH OF
YOU IS REBORN
IN MY BLOOD. NONE
CAN DEFY ME.
AND ALL OF
YOU...

...WILL MAKE
FINE CAPTAINS
IN THE WORLD
TO COME.

WE ARE
DESTINED FOR
A NEW HOME...AND
WE WILL NOT
BE DENIED!





BUT, LORD
DRACULA--WHY
SPEAK OF HOME,
WHY GRANT US
THE DARK
GIFT...



...WHEN
DOOM LOOMS
SO NEAR?!

OUR SHIP IS
CRITICALLY DAMAGED.
WE ARE STILL
CRASHING.



THAT WE ARE, BUT WORRY
NOT--MORTAL DEATH
HOLDS NO SWAY OVER
YOU NOW.

YOU ARE
REBORN BY THE
STRONGEST
VAMPIRE BLOOD
IN HISTORY...



...YOU NEED
NOT FEAR OUR
FALL.

KNEEL, MY
CAPTAINS.



KNEEL,
AND PREPARE
TO MAKE
PURCHASE ON
AN UNTAMED
SHORE.

ANY PAIN
WILL BE BRIEF,
BUT ONCE
WE'VE MADE
LANDFALL...



...OUR WRECK
WILL BECOME A
BEACON!

SOME WILL
COME FOR PROFIT.
SOME TO PILLAGE.
AND SOME TO
BRING AID.

BUT ALL
WHO SEEK OUR
VESSEL WILL
RESPECT ITS
TRUE CARGO...



"...OR DIE AT
OUR HANDS."

HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA

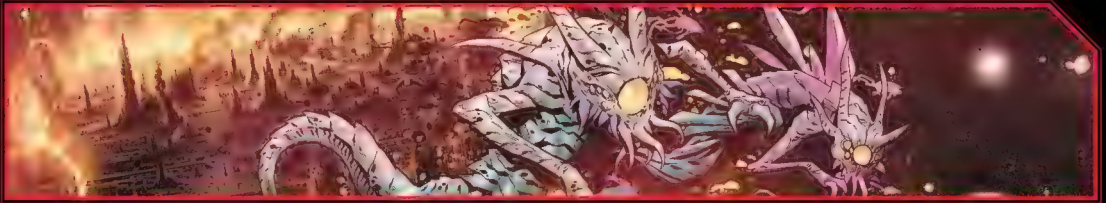
NOVA CORPS INTELLIGENCE

EMERGENCY STORAGE

ATOMIC KEY UNLOCKED
DATA-SUPER-COMPRESSION PAUSED

FILE: EXO-PARASITES

Native to Exo-Space, alternatively defined as the Neutral Zone, a buffer plane between realities. While their origins remain unconfirmed, they exist beyond even the Superflow. Theories cite Exo-Parasites as one of the most infectious predatory concepts in the cosmos, scavengers who may have once fed solely on universal carrion. However, in the common era, their voracious nature has driven them to pierce the membrane between realities in search of new beings and fuels, such as our Nova Corps and, indeed, the very Nova Force itself, upon which to feed. Cosmohistorians hypothesize that Exo-Parasite encounters have inspired interdimensional horror narratives on multiple worlds, including Earth, Chandilar, and Orkastra-1.



FILE: KNULL

By claim and action, a creature of primordial dark, of nothingness. Cosmohistorians theorize Knull, also known as the God of Symbiotes and the King in Black, to have originated in the Ginnungagap, the void existing between the sixth and seventh expressions of creation itself. While contemporary technology lacks the ability to confirm Knull's true origins, they are consistently supported by aligning folkloric narratives throughout the universe. While Knull was seemingly destroyed in Earth's 21st century after a near-total conquest of the world, rumors of his influence and continued worship persist throughout the known systems. While his worshippers take many forms, all are united by a desire to quell any and all light they find, be it in the eyes of living beings or the stars above.



FILE: HOWLETT, JAMES A.K.A. LOGAN

Born in Earth's 19th century, James Howlett would grow to become first the mutant wanderer known as Logan and then the mutant warrior known as Wolverine. During Earth's 20th and 21st centuries, Howlett became a fixture of war—both earthbound and intergalactic. As Wolverine, he encountered officers from our own Nova Corps, both Samuel Alexander and Richard Rider. As Earth's heroic age waned, Howlett briefly assumed a leadership position among Earth's mutant population, only to sustain grievous injuries in the temporal conflagration known locally as the Timestorm. With wounds that even his mutant healing factor could not mend, Howlett stepped away from leadership and returned to wandering. Shame or pride has driven him from his community, and he longs to be whole. Howlett's stalled healing factor makes him an ideal candidate for Xandar's burgeoning Supercorps program—the process of turning cells themselves into Nova Force generators would overcome most humanoids. Howlett's healing gifts, even diminished, may allow him to survive the procedure. And once imbued with the Nova Force itself, his body's own natural healing should be jump-started. Howlett's situation makes him vulnerable. And if successful, his rebirth as our first Supercorps officer will yield positive returns for both him and the Nova Corps alike.

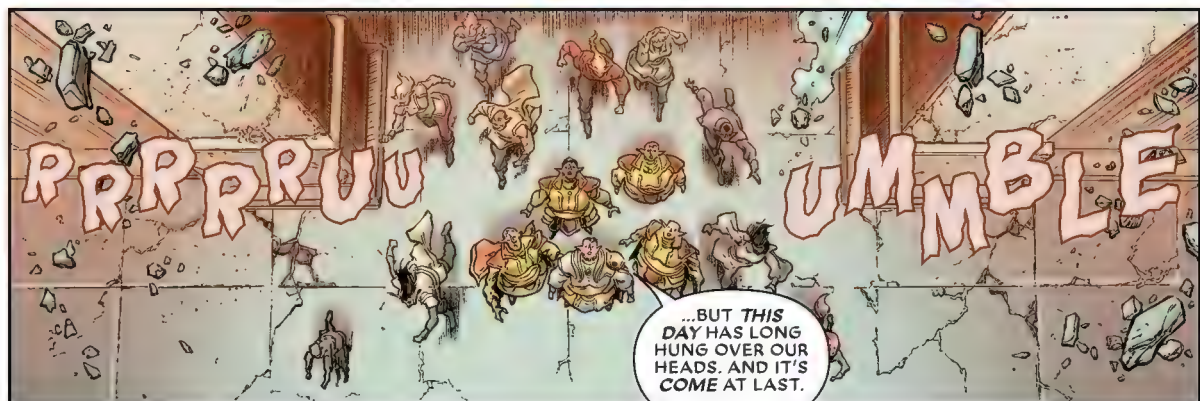
FILE: SKRETCH, CAPTAIN TORNISH

A peripheral intergalactic scavenger, Captain Tornish Skretch holds no actual military rank confirmed by anything but his boasts. Skretch claims Ghoul Planet as his homeworld, but the skull-shaped planetoid has no native species. As such, while he was born on one of the galaxy's most infamous ports of call for pirates and scoundrels, his species itself has yet to be identified. Raised on Ghoul Planet, Skretch lives by the space pirate's code. He travels the dark corners of space, salvaging and scavenging what he can from the wreck of the galaxy's great wars. Even the Skeleton Crew, who work on Skretch's ship, is scavenged itself, drawn from once-great empires in decline. Data is incomplete, but he is rumored to travel with subordinates of Badoon, Shi'ar, and even Skrull blood. With the Nova Corps alone, Skretch shoulders outstanding warrants for piracy, trespassing, fraud, burglary, and unlicensed necromantic practices. He is a fugitive to the Autocron Imperium as well as the nomadic Epsilon Horde. If captured and convicted, he stands to face multiple Xandar-Standard life sentences.



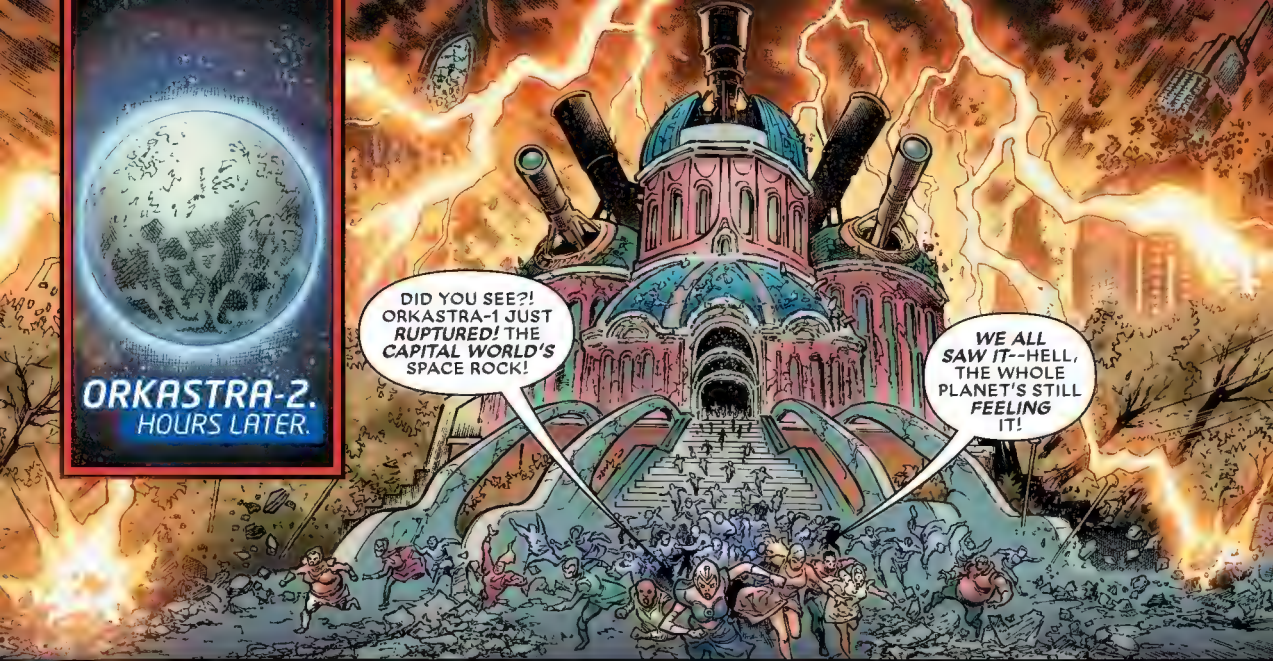


ORKASTRA-1.
THE ORKASTRA
SYSTEM.



"THE DAY
HE GREW
TIRED OF US."



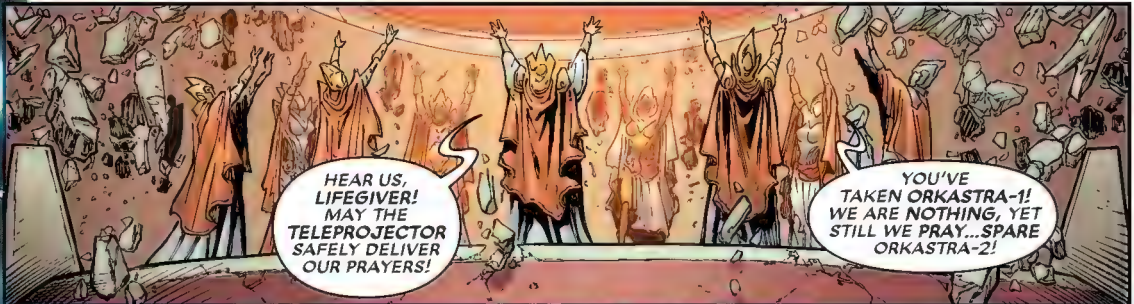


ORKASTRA-2.
HOURS LATER.

DID YOU SEE?!
ORKASTRA-1 JUST
RUPTURED! THE
CAPITAL WORLD'S
SPACE ROCK!

WE ALL
SAW IT--HELL,
THE WHOLE
PLANET'S STILL
FEELING
IT!

ORKASTRA-3.
DAYS LATER.



HEAR US,
LIFEGIVER!
MAY THE
TELEPROJECTOR
SAFELY DELIVER
OUR PRAYERS!

YOU'VE
TAKEN ORKASTRA-1!
WE ARE NOTHING, YET
STILL WE PRAY...SPARE
ORKASTRA-2!



THE ENTIRE
GOVERNMENT'S
ASH...AND HE MAY
NOT STOP AT
ORKASTRA-1.

ORKASTRA-2
CAN PRAY! WE
WON'T BEG OUR
DESTROYER FOR
MERCY. STATUS
REPORT?

THE
DISTRESS CALL'S
RINGING OUT LOUD,
BUT IS ANYONE
EVEN LISTENING?



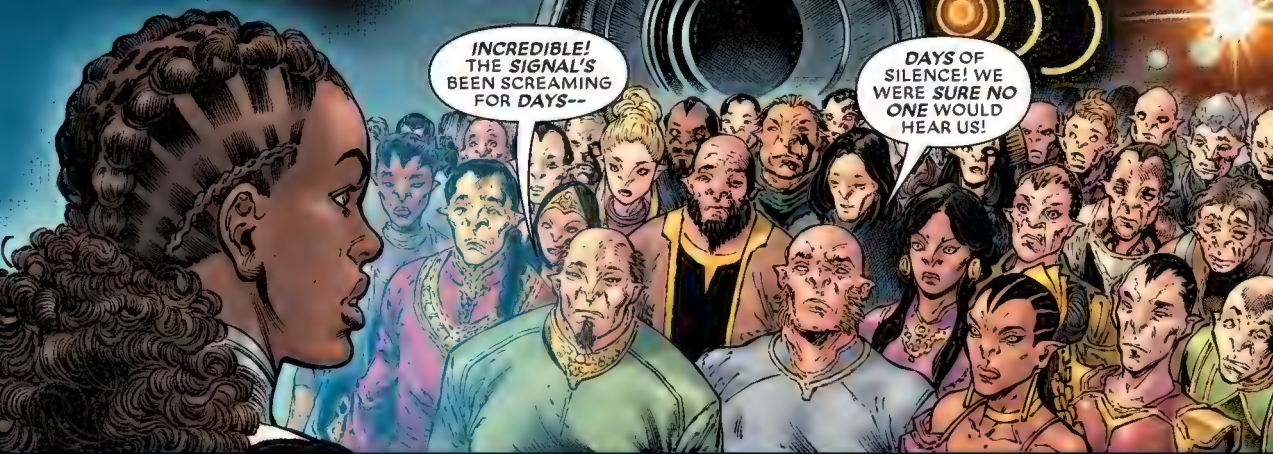
LOSING
ORKASTRA-1
DESTABILIZED
THE SYSTEM.
TIDES, ELECTRO-
MAGNETISM,
GRAVITY,
WEATHER...

...IT'S ALL
ASKEW. IF NO
ONE COMES SOON,
THERE WON'T BE
MUCH TO
SAVE.



SOMEONE
ORDER A
RESCUE?









...A
DESPOT
STAR.



WAIT--
WHERE'RE YOU
GOING?

YOUR
STELLAR TYRANT'S
MURDERED TWO
PLANETS--HE WON'T
GET A THIRD.

PLEASE
UNDERSTAND--
FOR EONS, QUASAR
BURNED QUIET. BUT
YEARS AGO, HE WOKE
TO THOUGHT.

HE BECAME
AWARE OF ALL
HE GIVES US--LIGHT,
POWER, WARMTH.
LIFE ITSELF!

WITH
AWARENESS CAME
ENTITLEMENT. THE
NEED FOR PRAISE,
FOR HIS TITHE...

...AN
OFFERING OF OUR
PLANET'S RESOURCES
FOR HIM TO DESTROY, JUST
AS HE CREATED THEM!



SO MUCH IS
NOT RIGHT HERE.
STARS AREN'T PETTY.
THEY'RE FORCES
OF NATURE.

IF QUASAR
WILLED IT, HIS
GRAVITY, HIS HEAT,
HIS RADIATION,
COULD KILL
US ALL.

WHEN WE
SENT OUR CALL,
WE EXPECTED AN
EVACUATION.



MY SHIP IS ONE
OF A FLEET THAT
GUARDS STAR
SYSTEMS, BUILT
ON PLANET
WAKANDA.

IT'S
VIBRANIUM POWERED,
WITH ADAMANTINE
PSYCHIC SHIELDS AND
CAVORTITE ANTI-GRAVITY...



...IT'LL
GET ME CLOSE
TO QUASAR.

YOU WILL
NOT LOSE YOUR
PLANET.



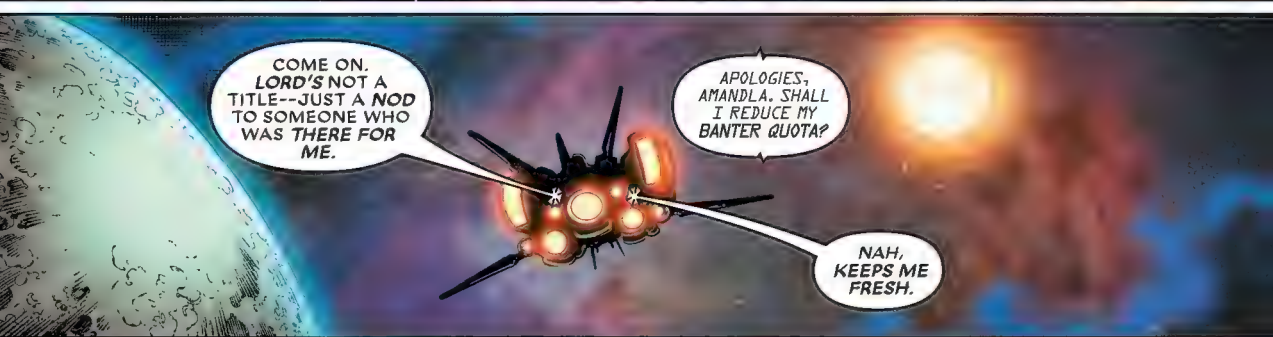
YOU
HAVE MY
WORD.



ON COURSE
FOR QUASAR,
STARLORD.

THANKS,
UMBINGELELI.
START LONG-RANGE
SCANS. AND CALL
ME AMANDLA.

AS
YOU LIKE, LORD
AMANDLA.



COME ON.
LORD'S NOT A
TITLE---JUST A NOD
TO SOMEONE WHO
WAS THERE FOR
ME.

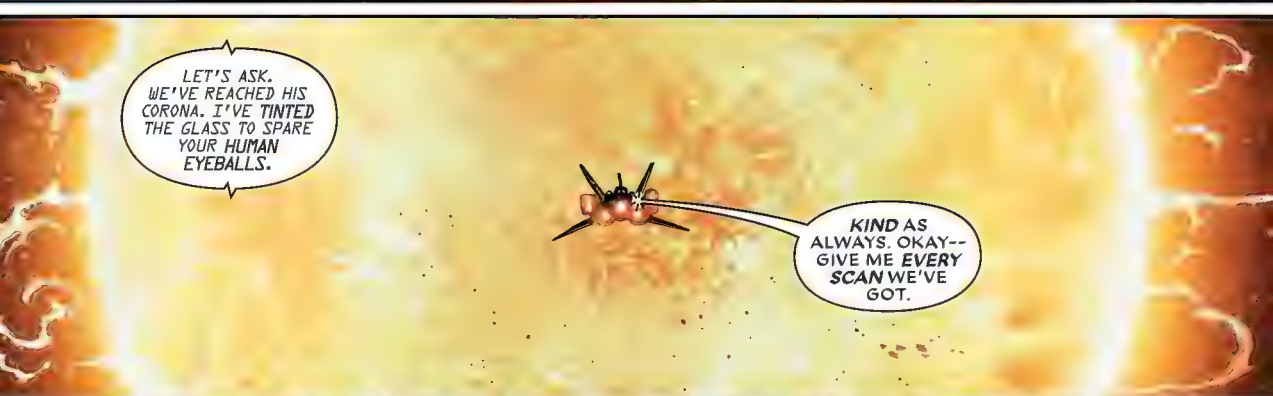
APOLOGIES,
AMANDLA. SHALL
I REDUCE MY
BANTER QUOTA?

NAH,
KEEPS ME
FRESH.



THIS WAS
THE CAPITAL
WORLD. BILLIONS
DEAD...IT'S NOT
NATURAL.

SUNS DON'T
DEMAND FEALTY.
SOMETHING'S
WRONG WITH
QUASAR.



LET'S ASK.
WE'VE REACHED HIS
CORONA. I'VE TINTED
THE GLASS TO SPARE
YOUR HUMAN
EYEBALLS.

KIND AS
ALWAYS. OKAY--
GIVE ME EVERY
SCAN WE'VE
GOT.



WHAT'S
GOING ON
INSIDE THAT
STAR?

SOLAR WIND.
GRAVITY FIELDS.
FUSION. THE USUAL...
EXCEPT FOR AN
ANOMALY AT
THE CORE.

SOLID.
SHIELDED BY
ALPHA ENERGY.
DESIGN WELL BEYOND
UNIVERSAL
BASELINE.

DON'T HAVE
TO KNOW HOW
TO MAKE IT TO
BREAK IT.
BRING IT UP.

THE ELECTRICAL
ACTIVITY'S LIKE A
BRAIN...THIS IS WHAT
WOKE QUASAR.
GOT TO BE.

LOOKS LIKE
LABWORLD TECH. BUT
WHO CREATED IT IS A
QUESTION FOR AFTER
ORKASTRA-3'S SAFE.

TAKE
THE STICK,
UMBINGELELI.
I'M GOING
UP TOP.

AND KEEP US LEVEL. CAN'T
CALL OUT A SUN WITHOUT
SURE FOOTING.

I'LL
IDLE US,
AMANDLA. BUT
OUTSIDE THE SHIP,
YOU'LL BE
SUSCEPTIBLE
TO--

MEAGER
CREATURE! NONE
MAY APPROACH ME
UNNOTICED

--TELEPATHY.

SEE HOW
MY MEREST
WHISPER HUMBLER
FOUR ALL SHUDDER
AT THE VOICE
OF GOD.

YOU...
YOU'RE
NO GOD,
QUASAR...

...YOU'RE JUST
MALFUNCTIONING
TECHNOLOGY.



BLASPHEMY!
I AM THE JEWEL
OF STELLAR
EVOLUTION!

SEE AGAIN
HOW SMALL I
MUST BECOME
JUST TO FACE
YOU?

JUST TO
MEET YOUR
GAZE AS YOU
BEG FOR
YOUR LIFE?

PLEASE.
THE SUIT, MY
STARHAMMER. IT'S
ALL VIBRANIUM--
BUCK YOUR
GRAVITY.

YOU CAN'T
CRUSH ME.
STARLORD COMES
PREPARED. AND
SHE DOESN'T
BEG.



SO
TALK--WHY
ATTACK YOUR
WORLDS?

I AM THEIR
LIFEGIVER. AS I
AM NOT HONORED,
THEY ARE DUE
MY WRATH.



RIGHT. THEY EVOLVED
ON PLANETS YOU MADE
LIVABLE. AND
EVOLUTION BROUGHT
YOU SENTIENCE.

SO WHY
ATTACK? WHY
NOT RESPECT
EVOLUTION AND
LEAVE YOUR
PEOPLE IN
PEACE?

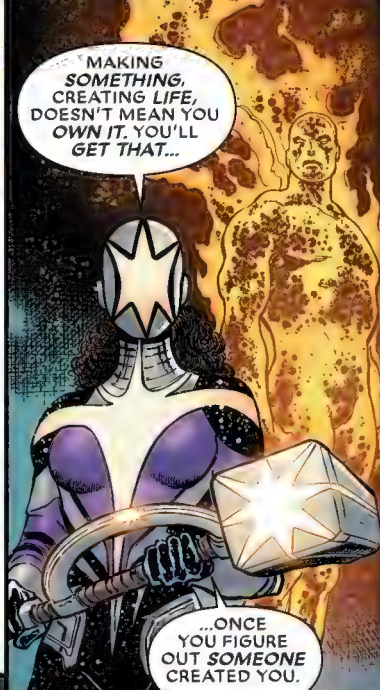
IT SLEPT
FOR BILLIONS
OF YEARS. I WILL
BE TAKEN FOR
GRANTED NO
LONGER.



...NOT BY MY
WORLD'S BRIEF
BEINGS, AND
NOT BY YOU.

I AM A
SUN. I FUEL
EVOLUTION.
I NEED NOT
RESPECT
IT.

IF YOU
EVOLVED LIKE
YOU SAY, WHO
REIGNS OVER YOU?
YOU'RE ALMOST
SEEING IT.



MAKING
SOMETHING,
CREATING LIFE,
DOESN'T MEAN YOU
OWN IT. YOU'LL
GET THAT...

...ONCE
YOU FIGURE
OUT SOMEONE
CREATED YOU.



SEE THIS?
IT'S THE
DEVICE AT THE
HEART OF YOUR
CORE.

THIS ISN'T
EVOLUTION,
QUASAR.
IT'S MAD
SCIENCE.



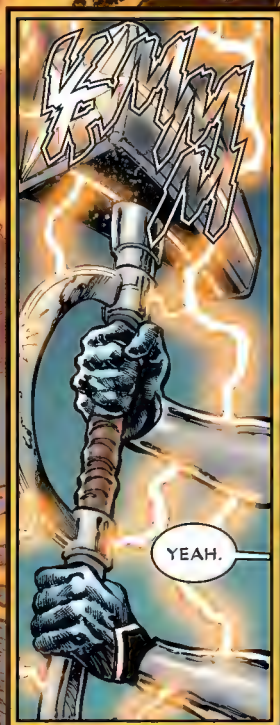
IT'S
DEBRIS--
NOTHING
MORE!



ORKASTRA-1
DIED FOR
BELLIGERENCE.
ORKASTRA-2 FOR
SHAMEFUL SELF-
DEBASEMENT.

AND STILL, I
HOLD DOMINION
OVER BILLIONS
OF LIVES.

NOW, FOR
DISCOUNTING
MY VERY BEING...
YOU WILL WATCH
AS I SLAY
ORKASTRA-3



YEAH.



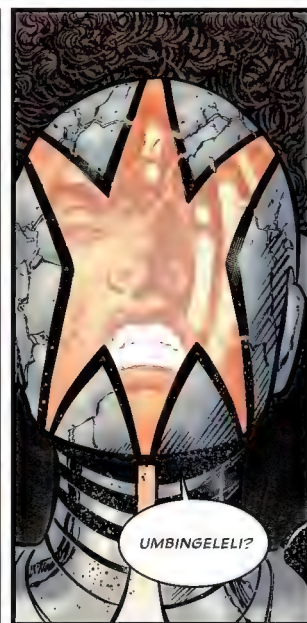
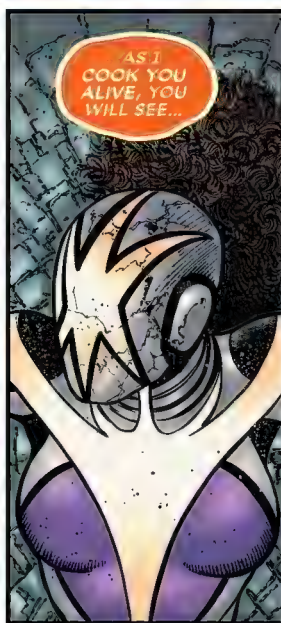
THAT
DOESN'T
WORK FOR
ME.

YOU ARE
NOT COSMIC
DUST TO
ME!

BEEN
CALLED WORSE
BY BETTER.

YOU
CHALLENGE
A SUN ITSELF,
FOR BEINGS YOU
DON'T EVEN
KNOW!!

WHY??





OPEN THE HATCH.

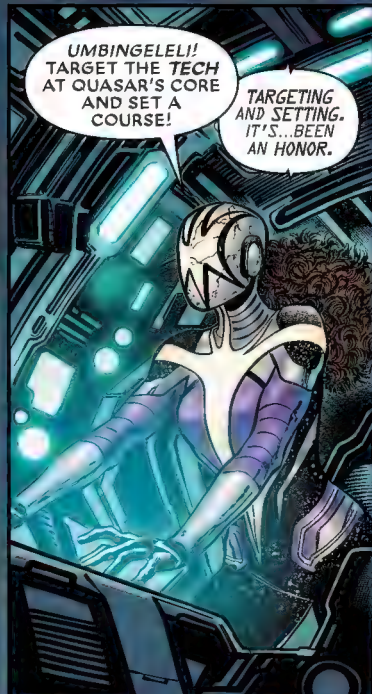
HAPPY TO. BUT A BREACH IN THE HULL'S SEAL WILL ALTER ITS--



RRRRRIPTCH

INTEGRITY.

QUASAR'S GOT HIS FOOT IN THE DOOR.



UMBINGELELI! TARGET THE TECH AT QUASAR'S CORE AND SET A COURSE!

TARGETING AND SETTING. IT'S... BEEN AN HONOR.



THAT SCRAP WITHIN ME IS NOTHING! A TURD OF ERRANT ORE TO BE INCINERATED!

AND YOU WILL SOON JOIN IT

YOUR SHIP REPELS ME NO LONGER, VICTIM



RRRRRIPTCH



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN MY GRAVITY RIPS IT WIDE? WHEN MY HEAT MAKES A KILN OF YOUR HOME?

WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN THERE'S NOTHING TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE BURNING FACE OF A GOD?

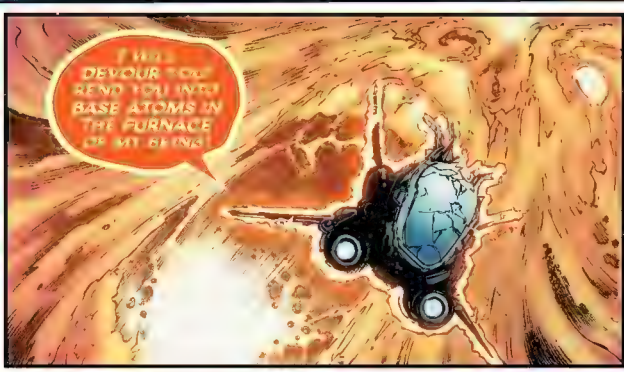
GUN IT, MOSTLY.



FLEET!
THAT IS YOUR
ANSWER?
WHERE
WILL YOU
GO?

YOU BELIEVE
SAFETY WAITS
INSIDE MY FLEET?
FLESH?

PLOKT

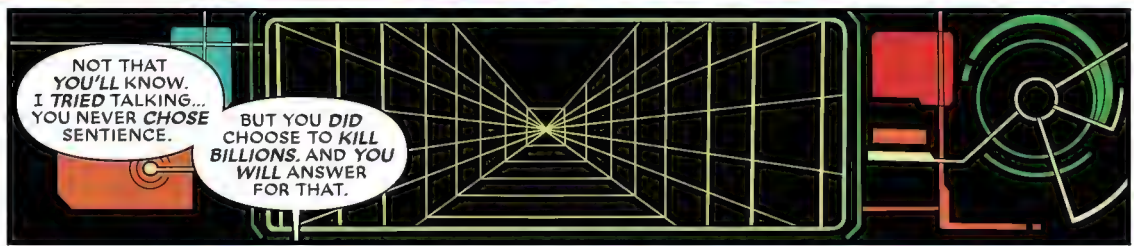


I WILL
DEVOUR YOU
SEND YOU INTO
BASE ATOMS IN
THE FURNACE
OF MY BEING!



PROBABLY
COULD, QUASAR--
IF YOU HAD TIME.

TIME!
MY LIFE WILL
STRETCH
TRILLIONS OF
YEARS!



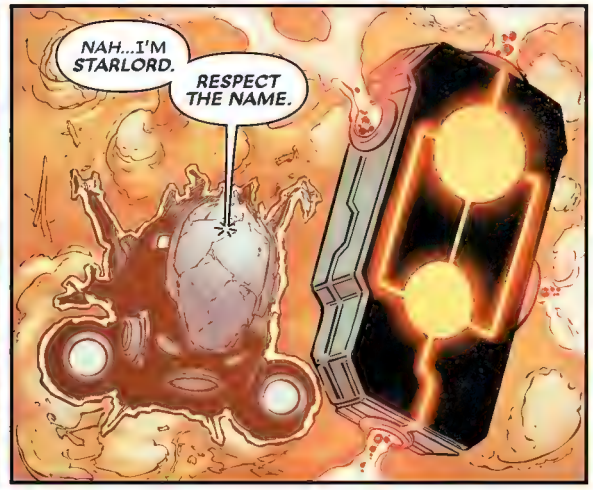
NOT THAT
YOU'LL KNOW.
I TRIED TALKING...
YOU NEVER CHOSE
SENTENCE.

BUT YOU DID
CHOOSE TO KILL
BILLIONS. AND YOU
WILL ANSWER
FOR THAT.



TO WHOM--
TO YOU? YOU'LL
BE ATOMIZED IN
MY FURNACE!

YOU'RE
NOTHING!
JUST A HERETIC
WHO FLEW TOO
CLOSE TO
THE SUN!

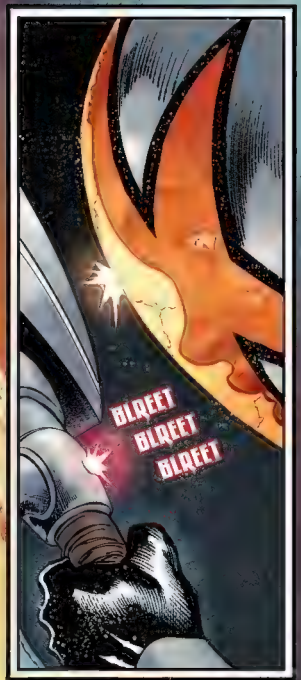


NAH...I'M
STARLORD.

RESPECT
THE NAME.







WEEKS LATER.

"IT'S BEEN AN HONOR"? I'M INSULTED YOU'D THINK I WAS DONE FOR, UMBINGELELI.

THE ODDS OF SUCCESSFULLY TRAVELING THROUGH THE HEART OF A STAR ARE 3,720,000 TO--

RIGHT. NEW ORDER--NEVER AGAIN TELL ME THE ODDS.

IT'S GOOD YOU'RE ALIVE THOUGH. I CAN RUN YOUR FLEET, BUT PUNCHES MUST STILL BE THROWN.

AS SUCH, QUASAR REMAINS DORMANT. AND ORKASTRA-3 HAS ACCEPTED YOUR WATCH.

OUR ORBIT IS STABLE. THE MANIFOLD ENGINE IS ACTIVE. WE'RE NOW CONNECTED TO YOUR ENTIRE FLEET...

...NETWORKED WITH EVERY SHIP ORBITING EVERY STAR SYSTEM YOU GUARD.

BY THE STARPATH.

FROM ONE SYSTEM TO ANOTHER...IN ONE SMALL STEP.

IF ONLY EVERY SYSTEM WELCOMED ME. BUT THE REJECTIONS STILL MATTER.

THEY WANT TO BE STUBBORN? I GET IT. BUT I'LL EARN THEIR TRUST.

I'VE GOT TO...

...BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

ABOVE THE PLANET MIGHTUS.

LORD--
LORD DRACULA!
THE SHIP...

"DRACULA RISEN" PART 2

...WE'LL BE
CRUSHED ON
IMPACT--NOTHING
COULD SURVIVE A
CRASH LIKE
THIS!

HOLD FAST,
NIGHT FORGE.
YOU ARE NOT WHAT
YOU WERE--NONE
OF YOU ARE.

YOU ARE
MY CAPTAINS
NOW. YOU ARE
VAMPIRE, AND
YOU WILL RISE
FROM THIS.

REST. HEAL.
REJUVENATE.

I WILL
MAKE CONTACT
WITH THIS NEW
WORLD.

ANY
WELCOME
WILL BE MET
IN KIND.

BUT
SHOULD WE
BE SPURNED,
SHOULD WE BE
ATTACKED...

...OUR
ATTACKERS
WILL BE
MET WITH
DEATH...

...AS ONLY
DRACULA CAN
DELIVER.

KRAASH

STARWATCH LEDGER

UNIVERSAL MAPPING—SECTION 6791

1st Admin: Estrellas, Amandla (Starlord). 2nd Admin: Umbingeledi (Ancestral A.I.)



1 SYSTEM: PRAETOR-AERIE

Capital World: PRAETOR-CHANDILAR. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: A young system, once lifeless, now the nest of the Shi'ar Empire. A hardline purge of the Empire's underworld recently led to a bloom in outcast Shi'ar pirates and mercenaries.

2 SYSTEM: QUASAR

Capital World: ORKASTRA-3. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: An old system, newly traumatized. Once the victim of a despotic sun, the system's people now fight to reinvent themselves on its one surviving world.

3 SYSTEM: ACYMMA

Capital World: MAYONGA. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: A strong system with a questionable capital, where two native species are divided by longevity. The ruling Nihudjka live for centuries, while the Madjka live for months.

4 SYSTEM: BENHAZIN

Capital World: WAKANDA. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: Starlord's adopted home system, after the loss of her birth system, Axa. Here Starlord built the Starpaths, folded-space doorways connecting two unconnected points, from legacy biotech based on the work of the Earth mutant Eden Fesi, F.K.A. Manifold. These Starpaths make every system under Starlord's watch no more than one step away.

KEY	
	Starpath-Connected Systems.

5 SYSTEM: MORTKO-MAR

Capital World: GHOUL PLANET. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: A wretched system orbiting a dim star. Its capital, Ghoul Planet, is a hub of vice and iniquity. However, its secondary worlds need not pay for the sins of its ghouls.

SYSTEM: INQUISITRA

6 Capital World: ZOSIMOS. WATCH: ACCEPTED (FULL).

Notes: Home to a Hexfinder Cooperative, from which an Intergalactic Inquisition is growing. Its planets, and even its star, are theorized to have alchemical origins.

SYSTEM: OVIDA

7 Capital World: ARANEO. WATCH: ACCEPTED (CONDITIONAL).

Notes: Home to the Death Spiders, who prize conquest and consumption above all. The Araneons accepted a conditional watch, instructing Starlord to guard only their star but never visibly intervene in their affairs, lest they look weak. Starlord agreed, but, wary of ulterior motives, placed unique safeguards on their system's Starpath.



NUEVA YORK.
EARTH-2099.
YEARS AGO.

TO OUR
CORPORATE
OVERLORDS...

LEONARDI

ripan

...TO THE
MEAGER SALARIES
THEY PAY US AND
THE DRINKS THEY
FACILITATE!

AND TO YOU, ROMERO.
THE NEXT ALCHEMAX
LAB RAT TO BE SHOT
INTO SPACE.

CHILL, MIGUEL. A ROGUE PLANET
APPEARS AROUND THE SUN, AND
I GET TO EXPLORE IT?

OR PILLAGE
IT. THERE'S A REASON
THE SUITS PICKED
YOUR TEAM FOR YOU.

SO THEY
FORCED A FEW
MINING TECHS ON ME.
SO WHAT? IT'S SPACE.
IT'S A TRIP TO
THE SUN.

YOU,
MICROCHIP...YOU
KNOW WHERE MY
HEART'S AT. THIS
IS MY DREAM...

"...I'VE GOT
TO LIVE IT."

THE INNER SOLAR SYSTEM.

WE
GOOD, CAPTAIN
ROMERO?



LOOK
AROUND, ED.
WE'RE MORE
THAN GOOD.

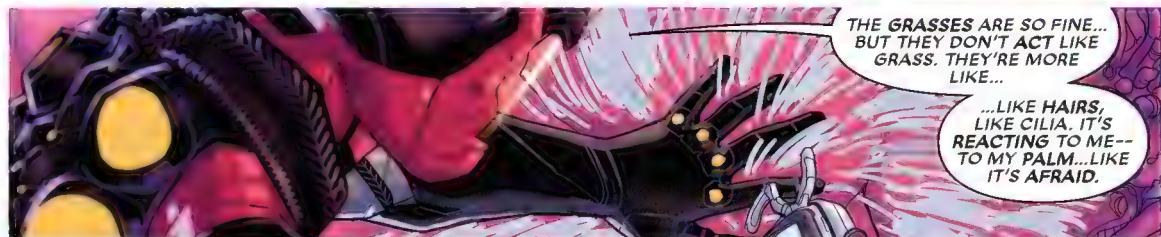
ALL DUE
RESPECT, CAPTAIN--
WE AIN'T HERE TO
LOOK, WE CAME
TO DIG.

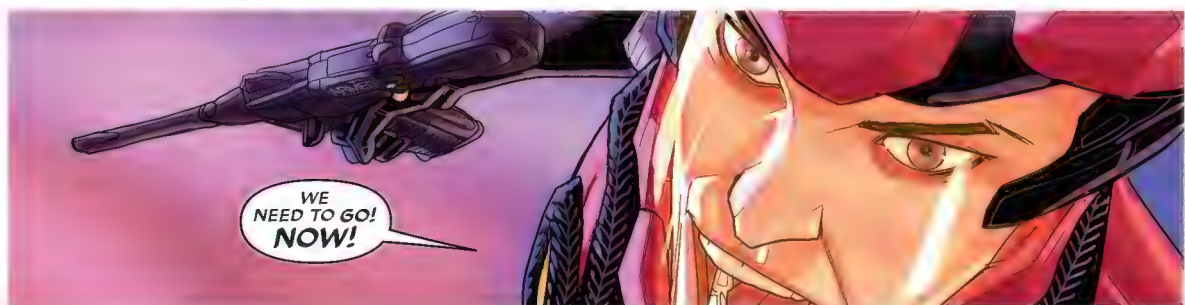
WELL, LOOK
ANYWAY. SOMEONE'S
GOT TO TELL ME IF
THEY'RE SEEING WHAT
I'M SEEING.

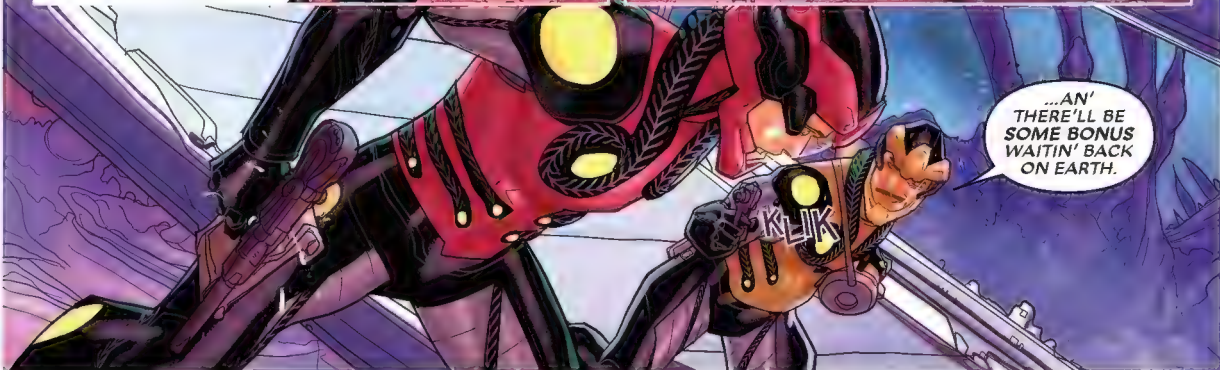
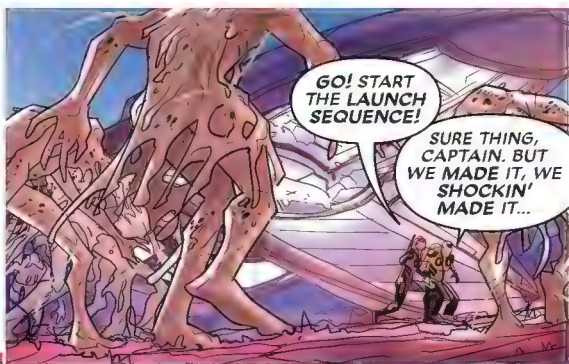
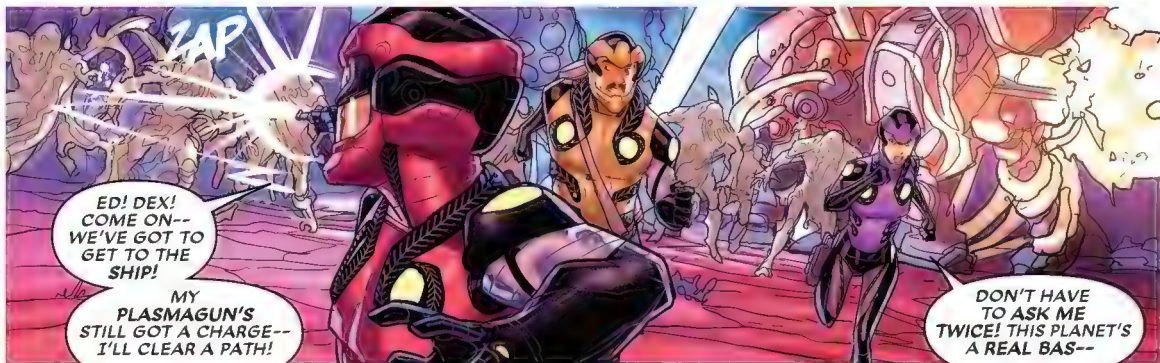
HA! IT'S
LIKE A FACE! AN'
THE POOR GUY GOT
HIS EYE SHOT OUT.
RELAX, CAPTAIN...

...I BET IT'S
LIKE THAT ONE
ON MARS. CRATERS
N' RIDGES, YOU
KNOW?

IT ALMOST
SEEMS SAD, ED...
BUT OKAY, LET'S
START OUR LANDING
SEQUENCE...





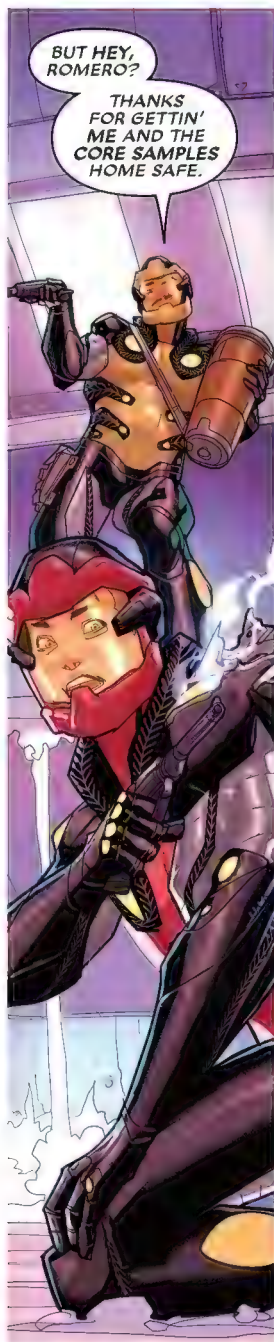




ONE I
DON'T INTEND
TO SPLIT.

AHK!

ZAP



BUT HEY,
ROMERO?

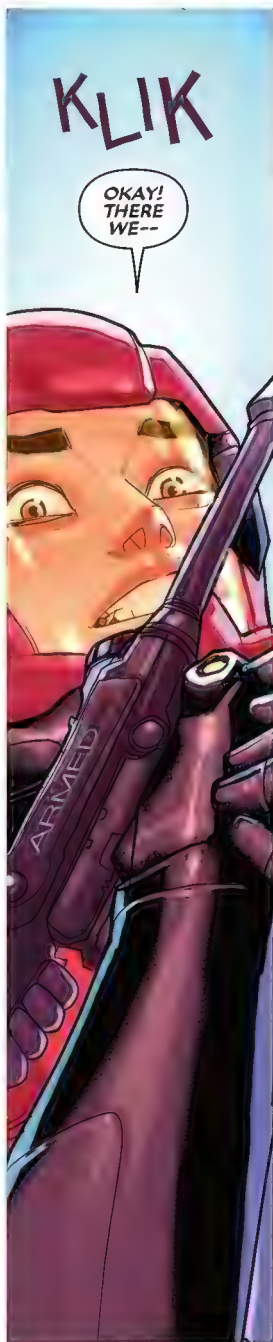
THANKS
FOR GETTIN'
ME AND THE
CORE SAMPLES
HOME SAFE.



ED...YOU
SHOCKING...
YOU SHOCKING
BASTARD...

COME ON...
COME ON! YOU
CAN'T JAM UP--
NOT NOW!

IT'S THE
SUN--GOT TO
BE! GRAVITY'S
TUGGING ON
THE CLIP'S
PLASMA--

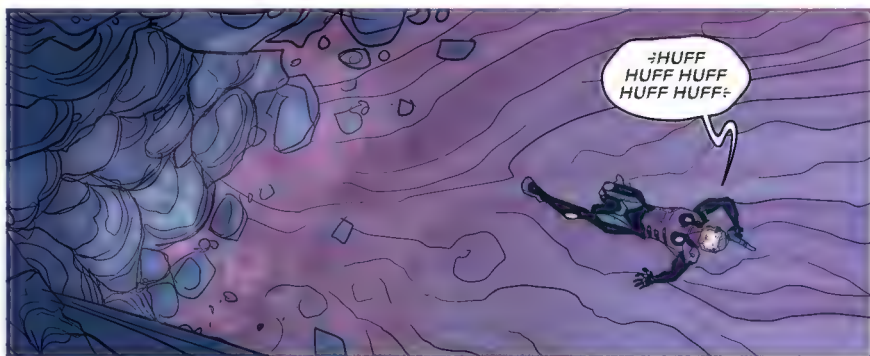
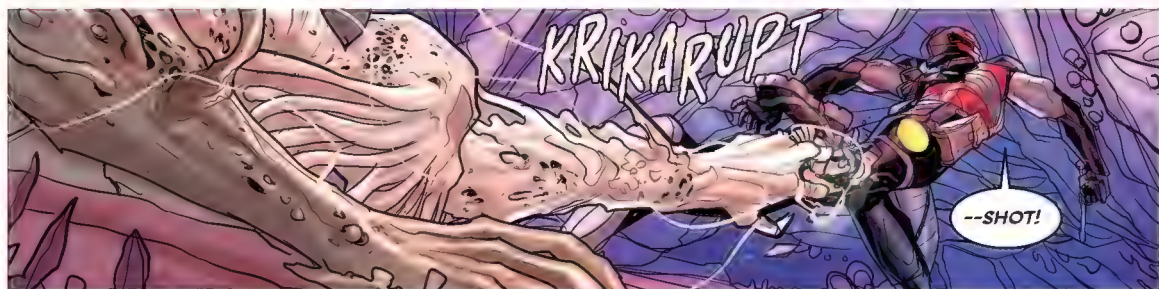
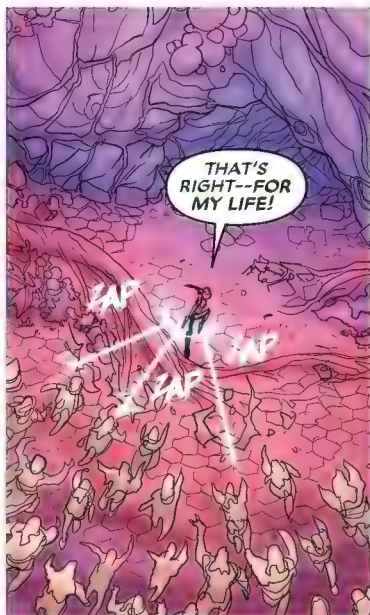


KLIK

OKAY!
THERE
WE--



WHOA!



DAY FOUR.

ENCRYPTED INTERNOLOG ACTIVE.
NEUROSKELETAL RECORDING ON.
SUBJECT--ROSS ROMERO.

HAD THE **INTERNOLOG**
FOR YEARS, NEVER USED
IT. FEELS **FITTING** NOW.

BEEN DAYS. THOSE
ABOMINATIONS
DIDN'T FOLLOW--MUST
NOT FIND ME A THREAT.

NOT LIKE I'VE GOT ANYONE
ELSE TO TALK TO. AND **THIS**
PLACE DOESN'T ANSWER.

IT SHIFTS THOUGH. IT
LURCHES. ALMOST LIKE
IT'S **BREATHING**.

DAY SEVEN.

RATIONS ARE CRASHED,
AND I'M HAVING TROUBLE
KEEPING THE WATER DOWN.

BLEARRGG...

BY NOW, THE SUIT CAN'T
FILTER OUT ALL THE WASTE, BUT
THE **AIR'S** GETTING BETTER...

...WITH EVERY **BREATH**
THE CHAMBER TAKES.
I...I THINK MORE THAN
THE **DIRT'S** ALIVE HERE.

DAY NINE.

NO FOOD. NO WATER.
DAYS OF **SEARCHING**...
AND NO WAY FREE. SO
STARVATION IT IS.

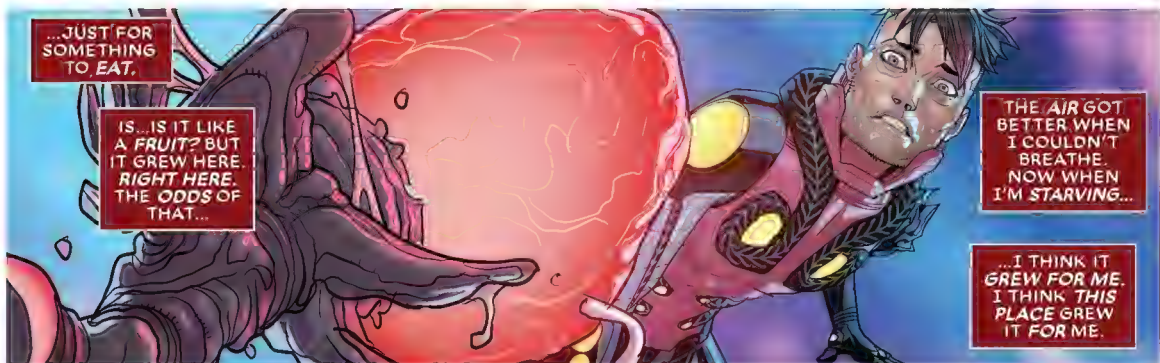
BETTER THAN GETTING
DIGESTED BY
ABOMINATIONS. BUT I'M
SO **HUNGRY**...SO **HUNGRY**.

SOME **DREAM**. LIED
TO BY MY BOSSES,
BETRAYED BY MY TEAM,
DYING IN SPACE...

...ALL SO **ALCHEMAX**
CAN PRIVATIZE
SOME **NEW ELEMENTS**.
I HATE IT. I
SHOCKING HATE IT.

IT'S **CHILDISH** TO SAY,
BUT SO WHAT? I
WANTED TO **EXPLORE**.
SEE WHAT HASN'T
BEEN **SEEN**.

AND THAT'S **GONE!**
THEY TOOK IT FROM
ME. I HATE DYING. I
DON'T WANT TO DIE.
I'D GIVE **ANYTHING**...

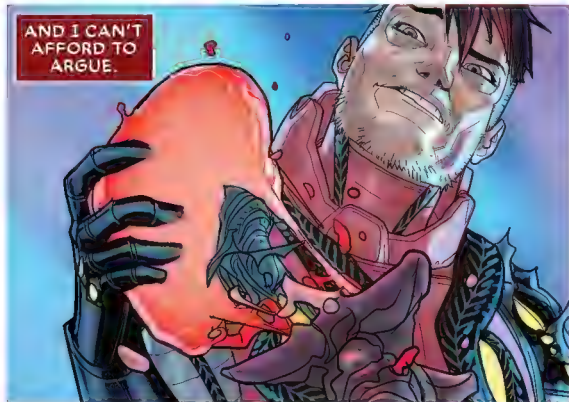


...JUST FOR
SOMETHING
TO EAT.

IS...IS IT LIKE
A FRUIT? BUT
IT GREW HERE.
RIGHT HERE.
THE ODDS OF
THAT...

THE AIR GOT
BETTER WHEN
I COULDN'T
BREATHE.
NOW WHEN
I'M STARVING...

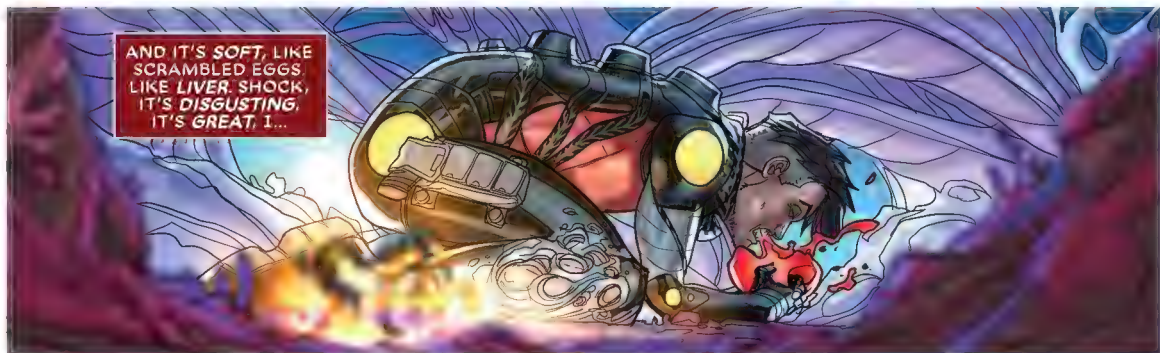
...I THINK IT
GREW FOR ME.
I THINK THIS
PLACE GREW
IT FOR ME.



AND I CAN'T
AFFORD TO
ARGUE.



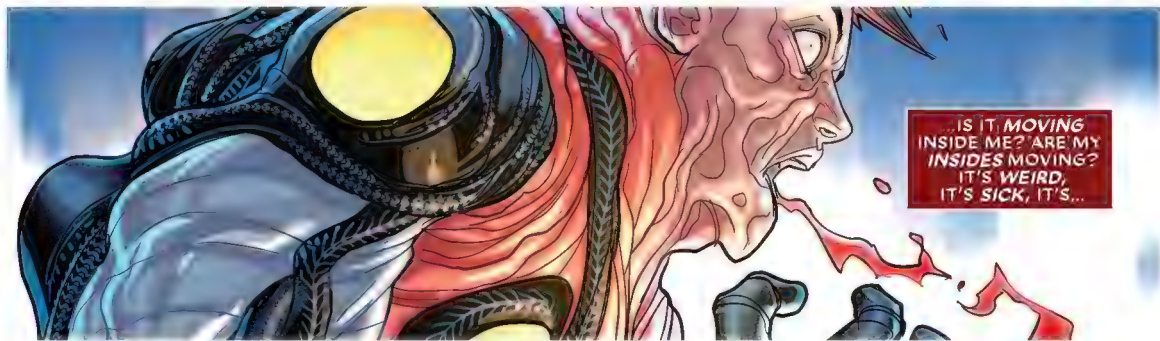
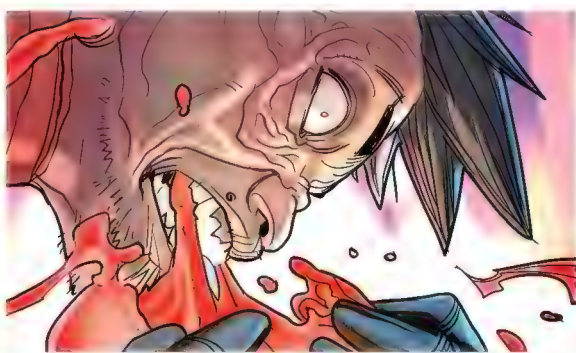
THE TASTE IS...
IT'S LIKE SWEET
IRON. IODINE AND,
LIKE--LIKE BEYOND
VOLATILE ACIDITY.



AND IT'S SOFT, LIKE
SCRAMBLED EGGS.
LIKE LIVER. SHOCK,
IT'S DISGUSTING.
IT'S GREAT, I...

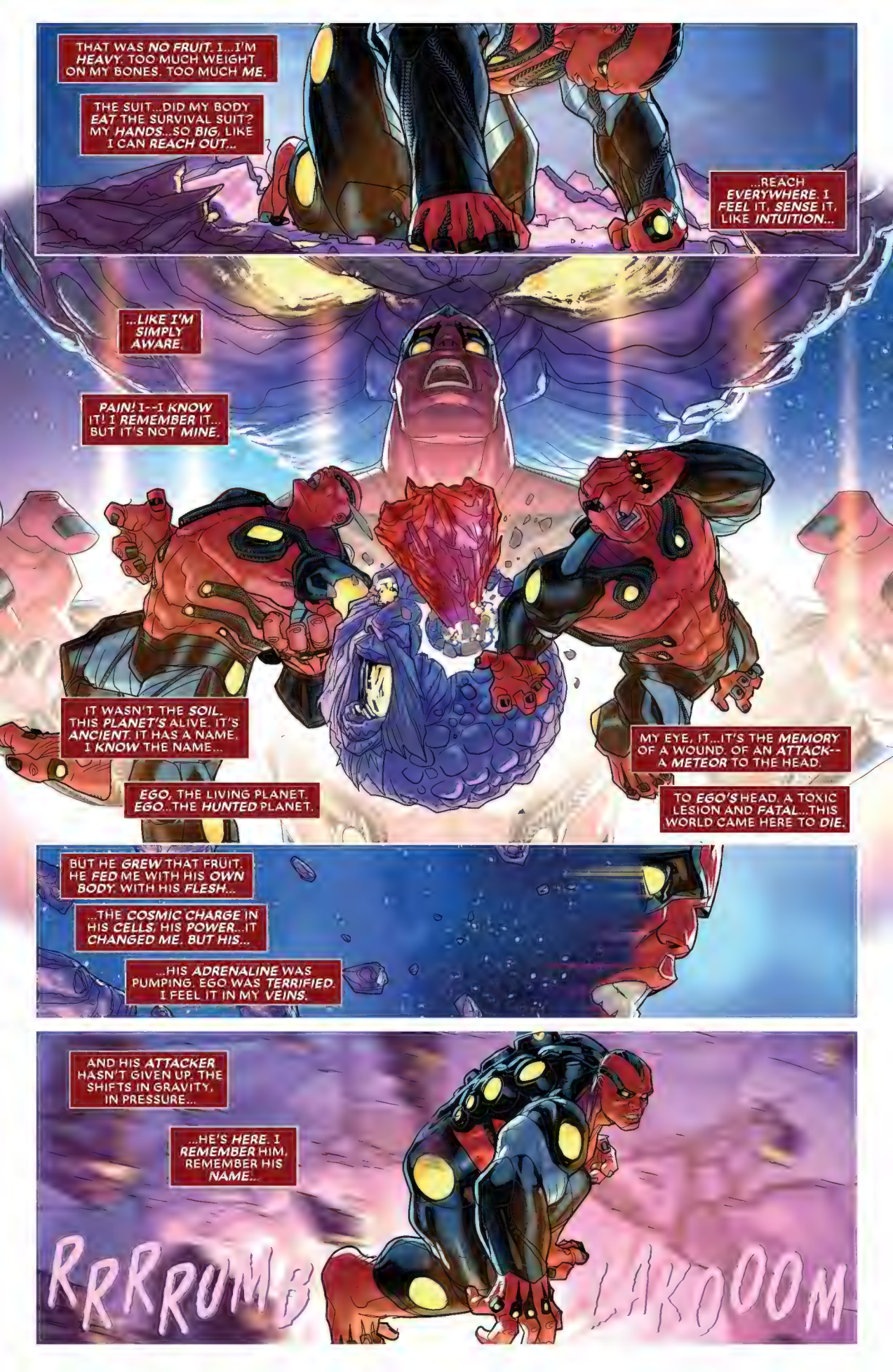


...I CAN'T STOP. I
CAN'T STOP. I FEEL
GOOD. FEEL LIKE I
COULD RUN FOR
DAYS, BUT IT'S...



IS IT MOVING
INSIDE ME? ARE MY
INSIDES MOVING?
IT'S WEIRD,
IT'S SICK, IT'S...





THAT WAS NO FRUIT. I...I'M
HEAVY. TOO MUCH WEIGHT
ON MY BONES. TOO MUCH ME.

THE SUIT...DID MY BODY
EAT THE SURVIVAL SUIT?
MY HANDS...SO BIG, LIKE
I CAN REACH OUT...

...REACH
EVERYWHERE. I
FEEL IT, SENSE IT,
LIKE INTUITION...

...LIKE I'M
SIMPLY
AWARE.

PAIN! I--I KNOW
IT! I REMEMBER IT...
BUT IT'S NOT MINE.

IT WASN'T THE SOIL.
THIS PLANET'S ALIVE. IT'S
ANCIENT. IT HAS A NAME.
I KNOW THE NAME...

EGO, THE LIVING PLANET.
EGO...THE HUNTED PLANET.

MY EYE, IT...IT'S THE MEMORY
OF A WOUND. OF AN ATTACK--
A METEOR TO THE HEAD.

TO EGO'S HEAD. A TOXIC
LESION AND FATAL...THIS
WORLD CAME HERE TO DIE.

BUT HE GREW THAT FRUIT.
HE FED ME WITH HIS OWN
BODY. WITH HIS FLESH...

...THE COSMIC CHARGE IN
HIS CELLS, HIS POWER...IT
CHANGED ME. BUT HIS...

...HIS ADRENALINE WAS
PUMPING. EGO WAS TERRIFIED.
I FEEL IT IN MY VEINS.

AND HIS ATTACKER
HASN'T GIVEN UP. THE
SHIFTS IN GRAVITY,
IN PRESSURE...

...HE'S HERE. I
REMEMBER HIM.
REMEMBER HIS
NAME...

RRRRUM

LAKDOOM

TERRAX

THE PLANET HUNTER!

YOU LEFT A
LONG TRAIL,
EGO. BUT YOUR
WOUND FESTERS. ITS
STINK IS EASY TO
TRACK. NOW I FIND
YOU HERE...

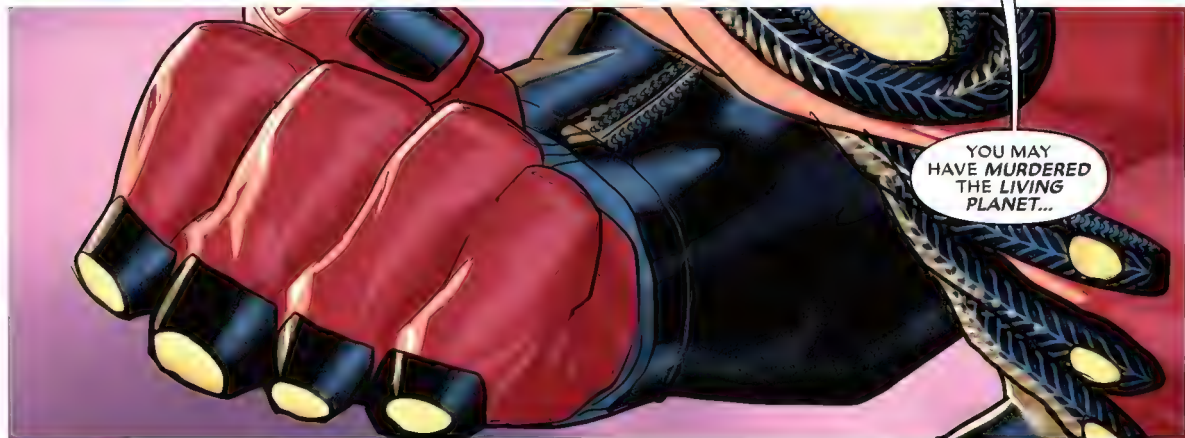
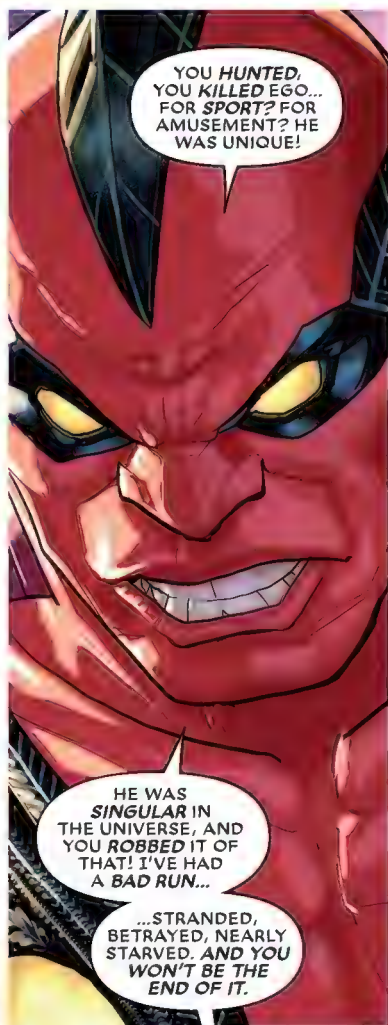
...BREEDING
MAGGOTS. DESPERATE
FOR AN INHERITOR. BUT I
WILL HAVE MY KILL. YOUR
POWER WILL NOT
LIVE ON.

NOT WITH
THIS BRITTLE
SPACEFARER,
INTERCEPTED ON
HIS SLOW TRUDGE
TOWARD
EARTH...

...NOR WITH
THE LIVING
TUMOR HIDING
WITHIN YOUR
CORPSE.

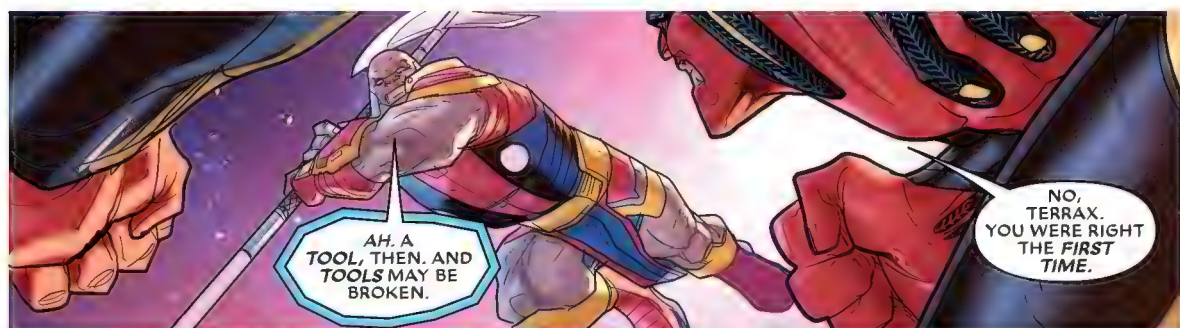
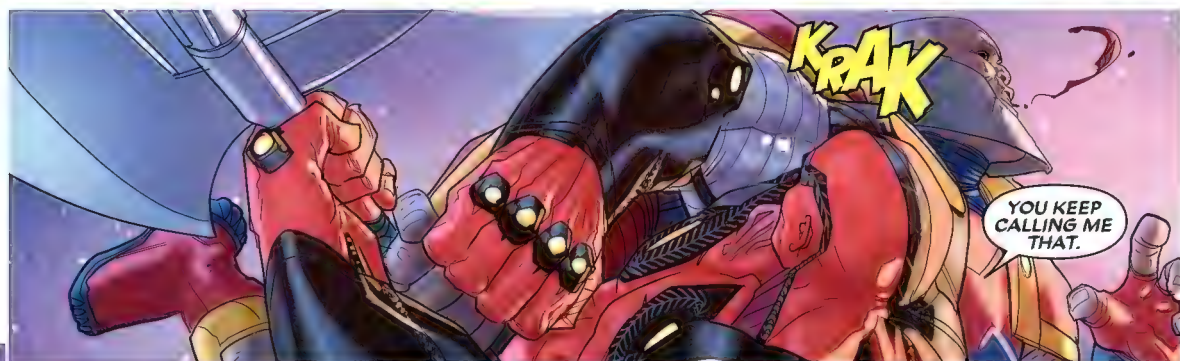
YOU DIE
TODAY, EGO.
YOU, YOUR POWER
PRIMORDIAL AND
ALL YOUR
SPAWN.

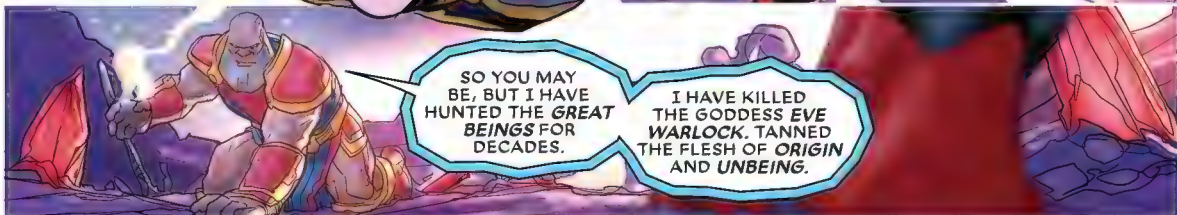
ERRRZAKT!





...BUT
HIS RAGE
LIVES ON!





SO YOU MAY
BE, BUT I HAVE
HUNTED THE GREAT
BEINGS FOR
DECADES.

I HAVE KILLED
THE GODDESS EVE
WARLOCK, TANNED
THE FLESH OF ORIGIN
AND UNBEING.



A HULK IS
STILL A SMALL
THING!



MAYBE
I WAS. MAYBE
I WAS GREEDY,
MAYBE I WAS
HUMAN.



BUT HUMANS
LEFT ME TO DIE--
ROBBED ME OF A
DREAM.



EGO'S LAST
ACT SAVED ME--
HE PUT THE ENTIRE
UNIVERSE WITHIN
MY GRASP!

THE DREAM'S
ALIVE BECAUSE
OF HIM! THAT'S
ANYTHING BUT
SMALL...

...BUT
THERE'S
ONE THING
LEFT TO DO
BEFORE
I GO!

RRRRRRUNMMMMBBB BLE

AS YOU'D
EXPECT, I'VE
GOT SOME
ANGER.

AND I'M NOT THE
ONLY ONE. EGO'S
MEMORIES ARE MY
MEMORIES.

IF...IF THAT
COURSING HARE
BELIEVES SUCH A
PLAYFUL JAB COULD
LAY ME LOW,
HE--

HE CAME
TO THE SUN
TO DIE IN
PEACE.

AND THE WAY
I SEE IT, IT'S
ONLY RIGHT...

NO!
WAIT...THE
SOIL REPELS MY
COMMAND!
THA-THAT
CANNOT
BE...

I CANNOT
DIE...NOT
HERE...NOT
LIKE...

...THAT
EGO TAKES
HIS KILLER
DOWN WITH
HIM.

...THIS...

NOW, I KNOW WHAT I
SHOULD BE THINKING--
AM I MAN OR MONSTER?
WELL, NO IDEA.

WALKING THE SURFACE
OF A DYING PLANET, I
FEEL LIKE THE STRANGEST
MAN OF ALL TIME.

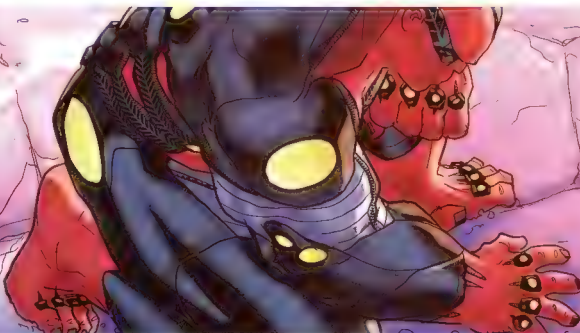
TERRAX WAS RIGHT.
BETWEEN EGO'S DEATH
THROES AND MY OWN
BETRAYALS...



...THERE'S A RAGE IN ME
ONE THIS NEW BODY,
THESE NEW SENSES,
CAN BARELY CONTROL.

BUT IF IT CONTROLS
ME, IF I LET IT TAKE
THE WHEEL...
I'LL MISS SO MUCH.

NEW WORLDS, NEW
CIVILIZATIONS,
EVERYTHING I'VE
HOPED FOR SINCE
I WAS A KID.



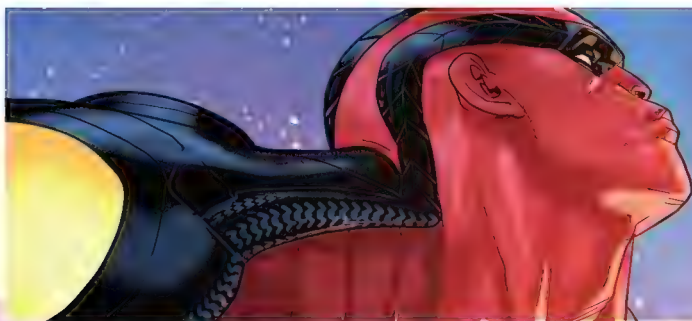
MY CREW, MY JOB,
EVEN TERRAX TRIED
TO TAKE THAT. I
CAN'T LET THE RAGE
FINISH THE JOB.

I'VE GOT TO USE IT,
GOT TO KEEP GOING...
BUT FIRST, I NEED TO SAY
GOODBYE. TO TELL EGO
IT'S OKAY TO LET GO.



I THANK HIM FOR
GIVING ME THE
STARS, SOMETHING
I'LL NEVER FORGET.

THEN I REACH OUT WITH
MY NEW AWARENESS,
SENSE HYPERSPACE
HUMMING AROUND ME.



THE ANGER BOILS UP
AGAIN. BOILS HOT.
BOILS HIGH. AND THIS
TIME, IT'S FUEL.

THIS TIME, FOR
THE FIRST TIME,
IT'S MY IGNITION
SWITCH...



...FOR ONE
GIANT LEAP INTO
THE UNKNOWN.

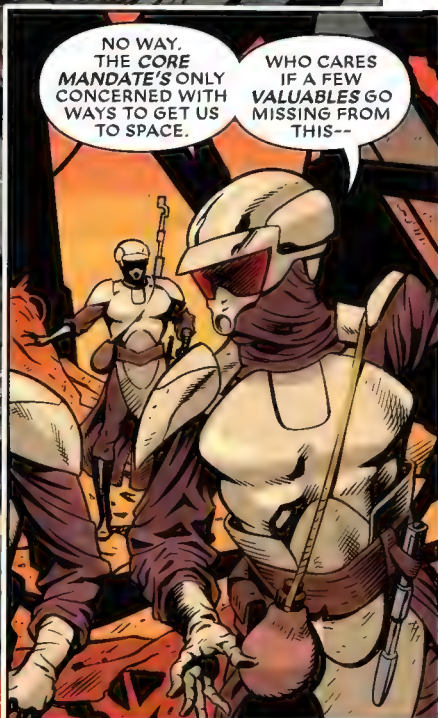




IMPACT
REPORTS WERE
RIGHT. IT'S
ANOTHER BIG ONE.
I'LL CALL FOR THE
TRINEGUARD...

...YOU KNOW
THE TRINE WILL
WANT THIS WRECK FOR
STUDY--RULER'S
ORDERS.

THOSE
GRUNTS WON'T
BE HERE FOR HOURS.
ARE WE REALLY
GONNA WAIT
FOR THEM?



NO WAY.
THE CORE
MANDATE'S ONLY
CONCERNED WITH
WAYS TO GET US
TO SPACE.

WHO CARES
IF A FEW
VALUABLES GO
MISSING FROM
THIS--



--HEAP?

SHUN THE
SUN! WHAT...
WHAT IS IT?

WHATEVER
IT IS...



...IT'S GOT
TEETH.

ALCHEMAX PRE-MISSION BRIEF

CLASSIFIED AND ENCRYPTED

SAFEGUARDS LIFTED.

AUTHORIZATION: CEDILSSON, THOMAS WILLIAM.

MISSION CODENAME ENCOUNTER WITH EGO

— Having reviewed coverage of all data drawn from long-range scans, the board is prepared to move forward with a sponsored expedition to the surface of our solar system's newest occupant. While the planetoid arrived in tight orbit around our sun, seemingly without notice, it is not happenstance at all. Electromagnetic scans reveal activity surrounding the planetoid not unlike that of a human brain, and spectral scans reveal numerous elements that currently fail to appear on our periodic table. While Alchemax pirate satellites are still working to leech intergalactic media for our own exploitation, we have received enough to make an educated guess—this planet is more likely than not alive. However, tele-carbon dating implies an age greater than all known living planetoids...all but one.

EGO, THE LIVING PLANET



— While encounters with Earth are relatively rare, our pirated data shows Ego to be ubiquitous throughout the universe. Time and again, his power has rivaled the greatest heroes of the stars. And here we find him visibly wounded. Here we find him in a decaying orbit around our own sun. As an alien planetoid rife with exotic elements, he is a treasure trove. But as a living world inching closer to a stellar inferno, he appears to have come to die.

In other words, Ego is a treasure trove with a highly final ticking clock.

The board recommends a manned mission. However, that presents a quandary. Our most skilled field researchers and groundbreakers also rate highest among the staff logs on the Kohlberg moral scale. This makes the overlap of those qualified to lead a mission to Ego and those willing to mine a living world extremely small. In fact, there is no overlap. However, when the full extent of Ego's sentience is left redacted, there is one potential candidate—one who will overlook minor moral compromises in favor of his stated reason for joining Alchemax: to see what has never been seen before.

This candidate is Ross Romero, currently a project chief in Research and Development. Provided Ego's higher thought is withheld, Romero is statistically likely to accept this mission and ask few questions. With his experienced leadership secured, staffing a crew beneath him that knows the true mission will be simple. The amoral man is in no short supply on our duty rosters. But secrecy will remain key—personality charts confirm Romero will walk if he learns too much. Alchemax must be first to monetize any new elements discovered on Ego. Thus, Romero is hired—but must never know the truth.



EARTH-2099. OASIS X.
MUTANT MEGACITY,
2000 MILES SOUTHWEST
OF NUEVA YORK.

KRYSTALIN,
S'GOOD...I'M
GLAD YOU'RE
HERE...

WE'RE ALL
HERE, CHANTAL.
EVERYONE--YOUR
FAMILY, THE
X-MEN.
YOU'VE BEEN
FIGHTING FOR
MUTANT RIGHTS
SINCE BEFORE I WAS
BORN. WITHOUT
YOUR WISDOM...

...WITHOUT
MUTANT ELDERS
LIKE YOU, THIS
WOULDN'T BE
PARADISE AT
ALL.

FROM
GENOSHA TO
THE MUTANT
PROMISED LAND...
NOT A BAD
RUN...

NOT
BAD AT ALL,
MOM...

...NOT
BAD AT
ALL.

CHANTAL
GOVINDA

I AM THE
SILVER SURFER!

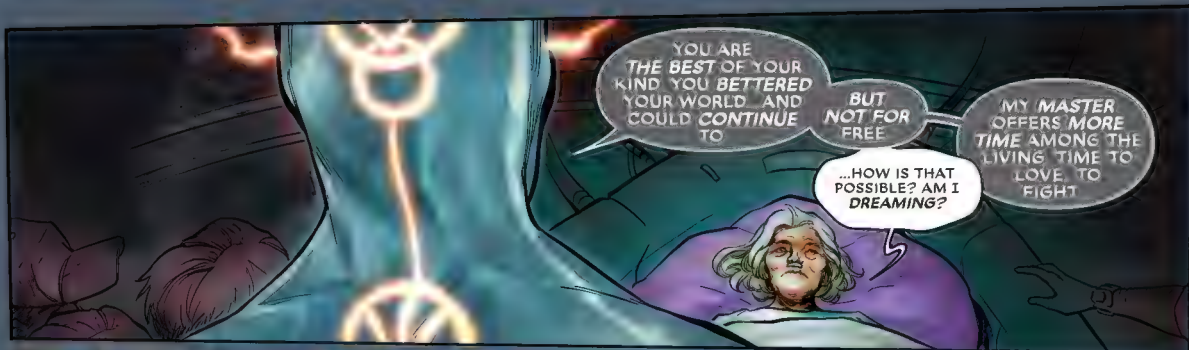
YOU HAVE
LIVED WELL, CHANTAL.
YOUR SOUL IS RICH BUT
OUTWEIGHED BY A
FEATHER.

YOU HAVE
USED WHAT TIME
YOU HAD FOR GOOD.
NOW YOUR TIME
DRAWS TO A
CLOSE

I COME
TO YOU AT
YOUR HEART'S
FINAL BEAT WITH
A SIMPLE
OFFER...

...MORE







HIGH OVER THE ROOFS OF THE
WORLD HE SOARS, *SEEMINGLY*
FREE AND UNFETTERED AS
THE ROARING WIND ITSELF!

BEHOLD THE SKY-BORN
SPANNER OF A TRILLION
GALAXIES! THE RESTLESS,
STREAKING STRANGER
FROM *BEYOND*!

THE GLISTENING,
GLEAMING LIGHT AT THE
END OF THE TUNNEL...

...THE HERALD
OF THE DARKEST
GIFT OF ALL!

WAIT--MOM?
MOM?! IT--BUT IT'S
IMPOSSIBLE!

GRANDMA,
YOU'RE AWAKE!
THAT MUTANT
MEDICINE REALLY
WORKS!

THE BRINGER NOT OF
MIRACLES, BUT OF
DAMNATION DEFERRED.

THE *SURFER* ASCENDS
INTO THE VOID, *INFERNAL*
HEAT AT HIS HEELS...

...AND THE **DEATHCALL** BIDDING HIM TOWARD THE NEXT SOUL TO BE TEMPTED.

HE **SOARS** ABOVE **MARS**, WHERE **SPIDER-WOMAN** PLAYS **COLONY SHERIFF**.

STAND DOWN-- NOW! YOU WILL ALL BE HEARD!

MARS HOLDS MANY **GOOD SOULS**, BUT NONE NEAR **DEATH**. NONE **RIPE**.



PASSING **CERES**, A **BARREN ORB DEADLY** TO MOST, THE **SURFER** SPIES THE **ZEROES.***

CAST OFF FROM **EARTH**, UNDEAD, NEEDING NO **FOOD** NOR **REST**, THEY'VE HEALED THEIR **MINDS**.



*SEE **MIGUEL O'HARA-- SPIDER-MAN 2099**.
--MARK 2099

THEIRS IS A **CULTURE** OF **INNOVATION**, OF **CREATION**, BORN OF THE **FREEDOM** THEY FOUND...

...AT **SPIDER-MAN'S** HANDS. THEY ARE **GOOD** BUT WILL **NEVER DIE**.

AND SO THEY WILL **NEVER KNOW** THE **SURFER'S BARGAIN**.



AT THE **GALAXY'S** EDGE, THE **SURFER** FINDS **OPPORTUNITIES** MISSED. **EVE WARLOCK**.



A **PERFECT BEING** ADRIFT IN THE **VOID**, **FRESHLY DEAD**--BEYOND THE **POINT OF USE**.



OPEN SPACE OVERWHELMS SOME. BUT TO THE **SURFER**, IT'S A **RELIEF**.



THE **SOL SYSTEM** HAS HAUNTED HIM SINCE THE **FIRST SOUL** HE SOLD TO HIS **MASTER**...

...HIS OWN.

ONCE, HE WAS
JONAH MARLO
OF EARTH.

SON TO A FATHER
LOST TO THE STREETS,
HE DEDICATED HIS LIFE
TO THOSE WITH LESS.

TO DELIVERING FOOD,
SHELTER, AND WATER
AS A HUMAN RIGHT.

A GOOD LIFE...
CUT SHORT
TOO SOON.

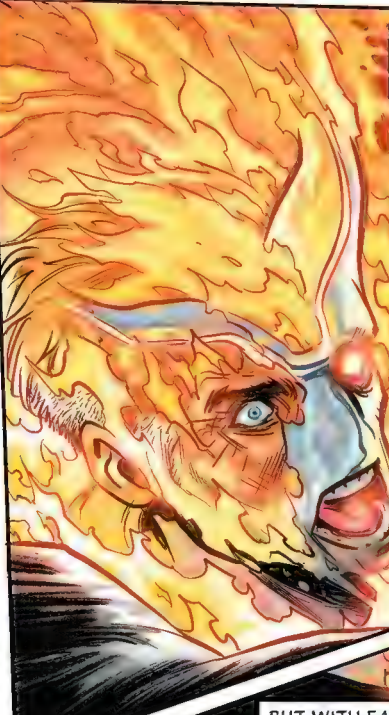
JONAH,
JONAH... ALL
THAT WORK, NEVER
SMOKING, BARELY
DRINKING...

WHO'D HAVE
THOUGHT YOU'D
END UP HERE WITH
SO MUCH LEFT
UNDONE?

MARLO RESENTED HIS
CANCER--HE DIDN'T
WANT TO DIE SO
YOUNG AND ALONE.

SO MEPHISTO OFFERED
A SECOND CHANCE.
ENDLESS LIFE. AND
DESPERATE, AFRAID...





...MARLO ACCEPTED
THE BARGAIN.
BUT IT WAS NOT
WHAT HE HOPED.

IMMORTAL,
UNYIELDING, AND
UNSEEN LEST HE
SO WISHES...



...THE SURFER HUNTS
ONLY THE NEXT SOUL TO
TEMPT FOR MEPHISTO.



BUT WITH EACH LIFE
DAMNED BY AN
IMPOSSIBLE CHOICE,
HE FESTERS.



WITH EACH
ACCEPTANCE,
HIS SHAME GROWS.
WITH EVERY
REJECTION,
HE IS PLEASED.

HE LONGS TO BE FREE,
BUT THAT IS BY DESIGN.
FOR HIS MASTER,
SUFFERING IS THE POINT.



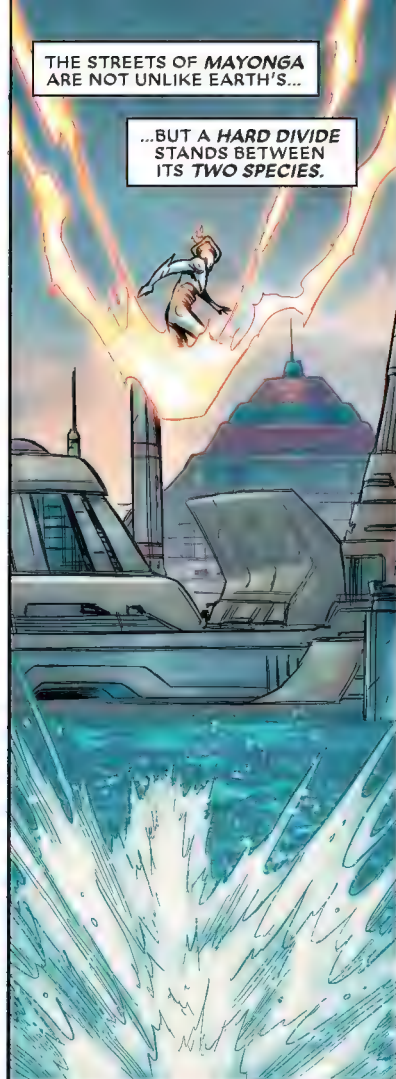
AND SO SATAN'S SURFER
COMES TO YET ANOTHER
INNOCENT WORLD.



MAYONGA

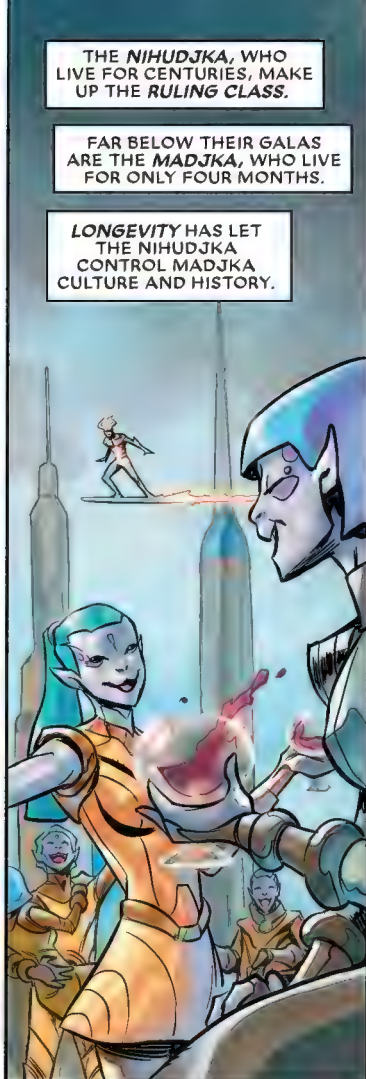


COMES TO TEMPT ITS
BEST WITH THE WORST.



THE STREETS OF **MAYONGA** ARE NOT UNLIKE EARTH'S...

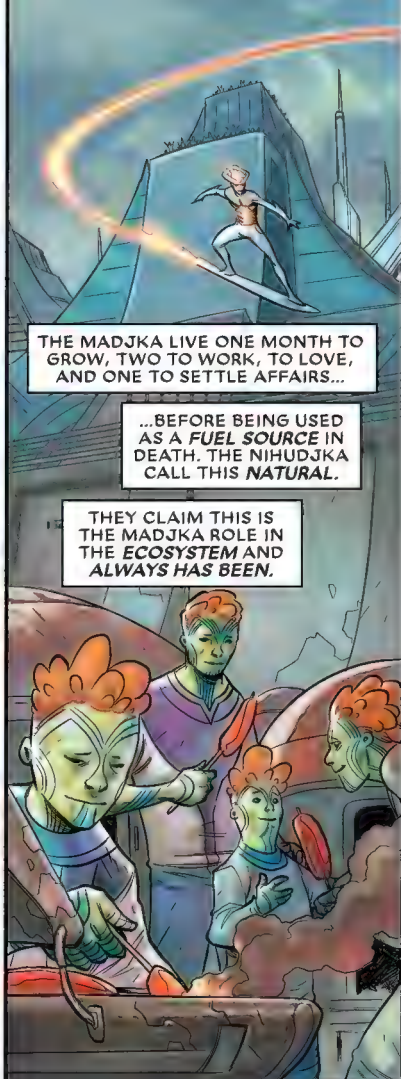
...BUT A **HARD DIVIDE** STANDS BETWEEN ITS **TWO SPECIES**.



THE **NIHUDJKA**, WHO LIVE FOR CENTURIES, MAKE UP THE **RULING CLASS**.

FAR BELOW THEIR GALAS ARE THE **MADJKA**, WHO LIVE FOR ONLY FOUR MONTHS.

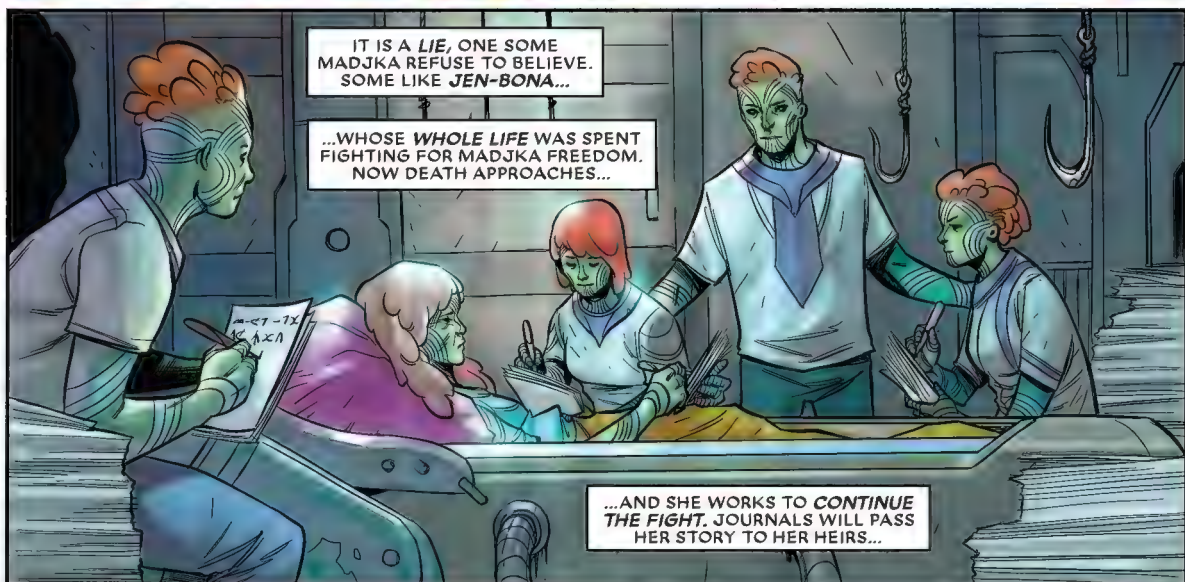
LONGEVITY HAS LET THE **NIHUDJKA** CONTROL **MADJKA** CULTURE AND HISTORY.



THE **MADJKA** LIVE ONE MONTH TO GROW, TWO TO WORK, TO LOVE, AND ONE TO SETTLE AFFAIRS...

...BEFORE BEING USED AS A **FUEL SOURCE** IN DEATH. THE **NIHUDJKA** CALL THIS **NATURAL**.

THEY CLAIM THIS IS THE **MADJKA** ROLE IN THE **ECOSYSTEM** AND ALWAYS HAS BEEN.



IT IS A **LIE**, ONE SOME **MADJKA** REFUSE TO BELIEVE. SOME LIKE **JEN-BONA**...

...WHOSE **WHOLE LIFE** WAS SPENT FIGHTING FOR **MADJKA** FREEDOM. NOW DEATH APPROACHES...

...AND SHE WORKS TO **CONTINUE THE FIGHT**. JOURNALS WILL PASS HER STORY TO HER HEIRS...



...AS **THEIRS** WILL BE PASSED TO THEIR **FUTURE KIN**. A **TRUE WRITTEN HISTORY** WILL BE THEIR **SWORD**.

IN TIME... THE **MADJKA** WILL BE **FREE**.

THE SURFER HAS SEEN
MOURNING COUNTLESS
TIMES, IN COUNTLESS WAYS.

BUT THIS FAMILY DOES
NOT MOURN, IT **PLANS**.
JEN-BONA LIVED FOR
HER PEOPLE.

EVEN UP TO HER
HEART'S FINAL BEAT,
SHE **FIGHTS**. HERS IS
TRUE DEFIANCE...



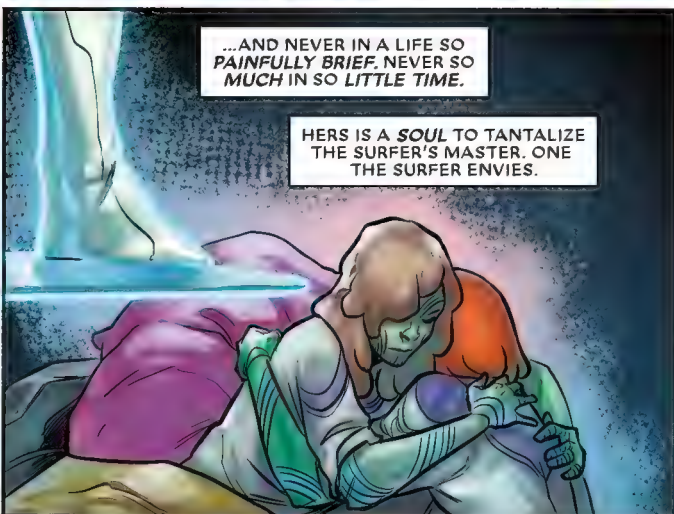
...NOT OF **DEATH'S STING**,
BUT OF ITS **MEANING**. JEN-BONA
WILL DIE--HER **DREAM** WILL NOT.

THE SURFER HAS SEEN
SELFLESSNESS, BUT NEVER
SO **ABSOLUTE**, SO **DRIVEN**...



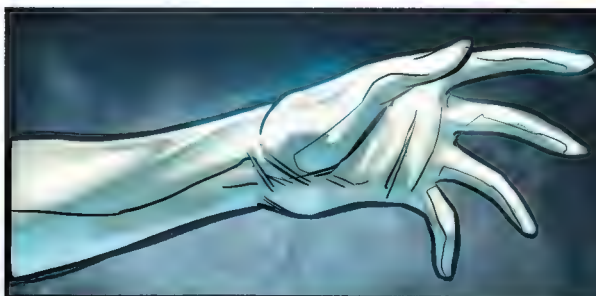
...AND NEVER IN A LIFE SO
PAINFULLY BRIEF. NEVER SO
MUCH IN SO **LITTLE TIME**.

HERS IS A **SOUL** TO TANTALIZE
THE SURFER'S MASTER. ONE
THE SURFER **ENVIES**.



ONE HE **WISHES** HAD
MORE TIME. ONE THAT EVEN
KNOWING THE PRICE...

...WOULD ACCEPT
HELL IF IT MEANT
PROTECTING HER KIND.



HE **KNOWS** WHAT
WILL HAPPEN IF
THE OFFER IS MADE.

HE
KNOWS.



AND FOR THE
FIRST TIME
SINCE HE TOOK
TO THE STARS...



...THE WEIGHT OF
THAT IS MORE THAN
HE CAN BEAR.

AND SO,
JEN-BONA
PASSES.

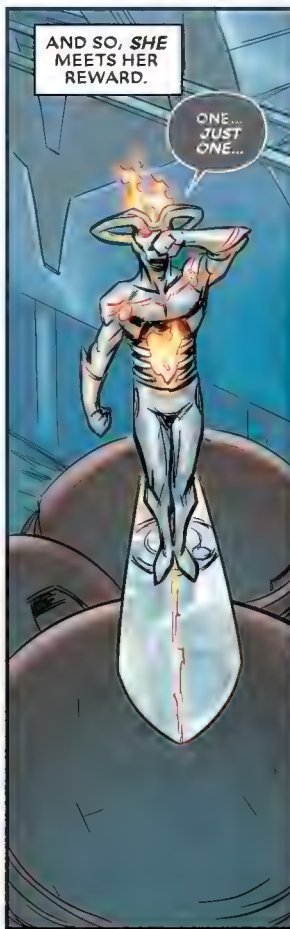


AND SO,
THE FIGHT
LIVES ON.



AND SO, SHE
MEETS HER
REWARD.

ONE...
JUST
ONE...



ALL
THE YEARS,
ALL THE WORLDS,
ALL THE SOULS
REAPED IN HIS
SERVICE...

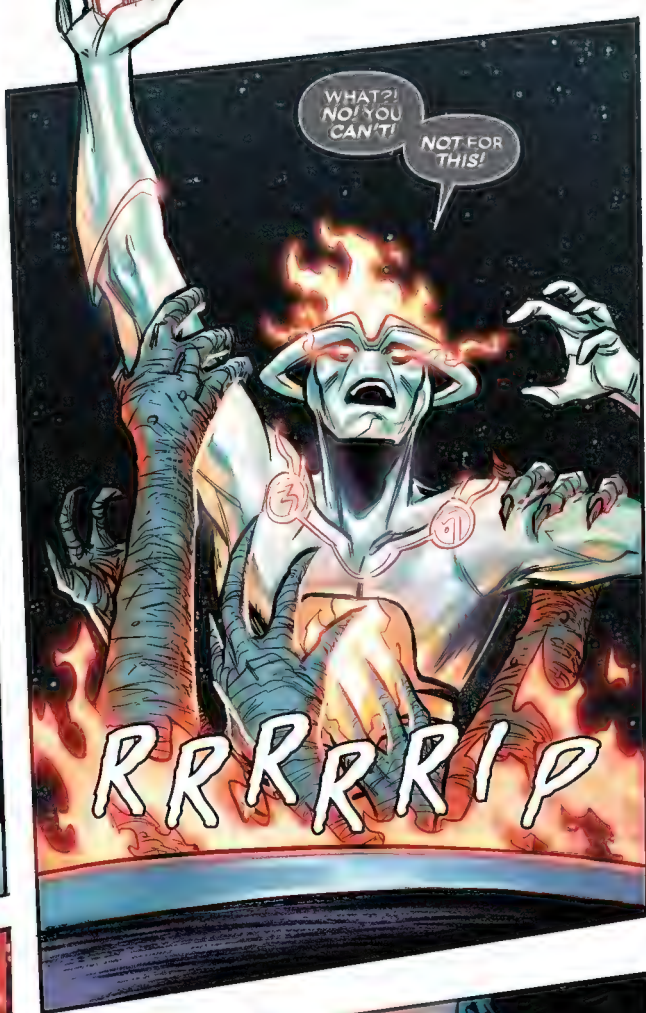
...EVEN HE
COULDN'T
BEGRUDGE
ME ONE
MERCY—





SURFER!

CHOK



WHAT?!

NO! YOU CAN'T!

NOT FOR THIS!

RRRRRRIP



NOOOOOOOO!

A GOOD PET
COMES WHEN IT'S
CALLED. AND YOU
WERE CALLED.



BECKONED
TO THE HADEAN
UNDERWORLD.
SUMMONED
HOME...

SLAM

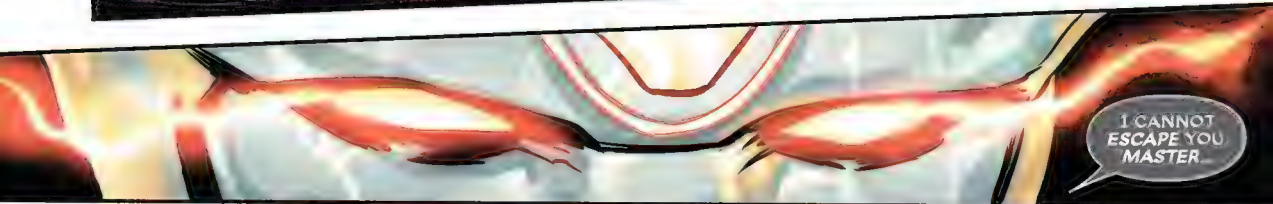
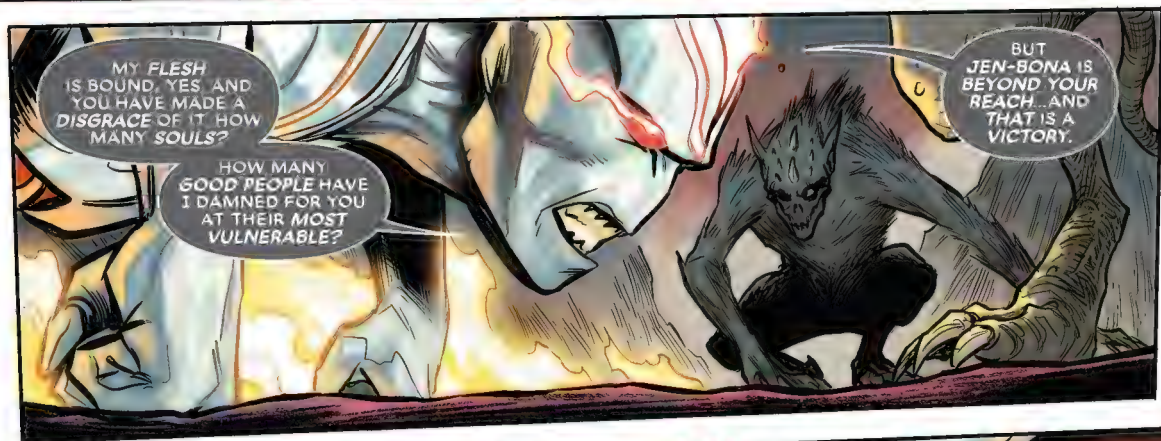
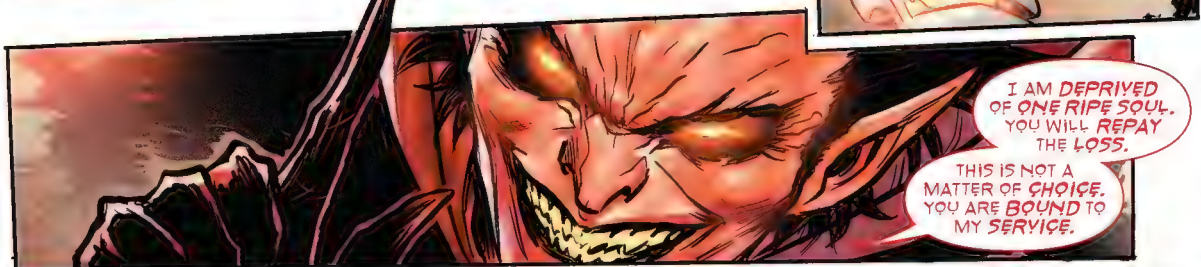
...TO THE
REALM OF
MEPHISTO.

YOU KNOW
YOUR CHARGE. YOU
LIVE YOUR MANDATE.
YET YOU DENY ME A
SOUL MOST
RIPE.

WHY?

I...I
COULDN'T.
SHE DIDN'T
DESERVE...





A comic book panel featuring a character in a blue and yellow suit, possibly a superhero or villain, standing in the lower center. The character has a blue face and is looking upwards with an open mouth. A speech bubble above the character contains the text "...BUT I WILL SERVE NO LONGER!". The background is a dramatic, fiery explosion with large, dark, angular shapes. At the bottom of the panel, there are large, stylized sound effects in a jagged, outlined font.

...BUT I
WILL SERVE
NO LONGER!

FLAMMANTHROON



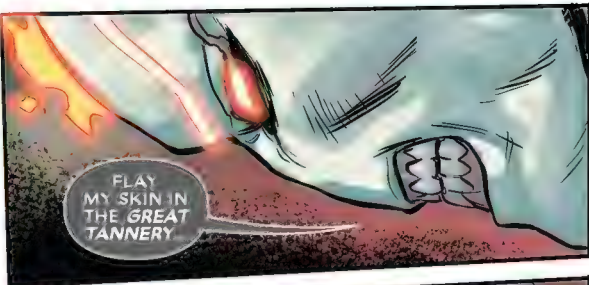




HERE.
TO JOIN
MY WEeping
HOARD.

YOUR
SUFFERING
WOULD NOT END
BUT, AT LAST,
BEGIN IN
FULL.

SO...
SO BE IT.
SO BE IT

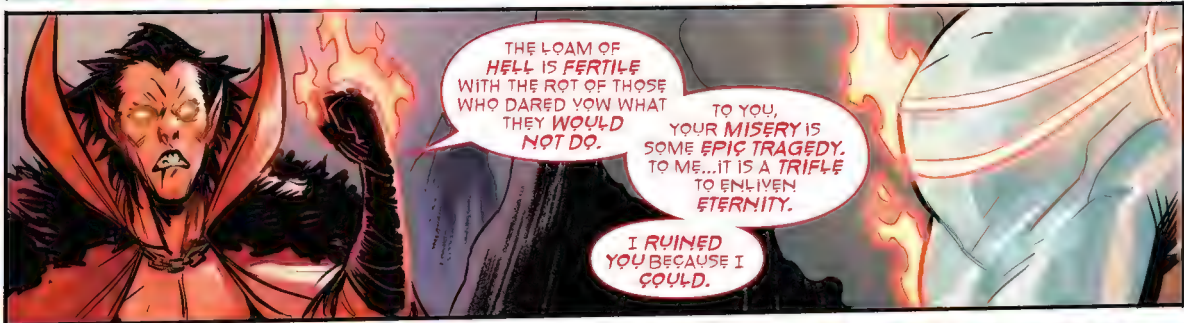


FLAY
MY SKIN IN
THE GREAT
TANNERY.



BURY MY
HEART IN THE
TRAUMA FIELDS,
MAKE POISON OF
MY CHERISHED
MEMORIES

DO
YOUR WORST, I
WILL NOT DAMN
ANOTHER. NEVER
AGAIN.



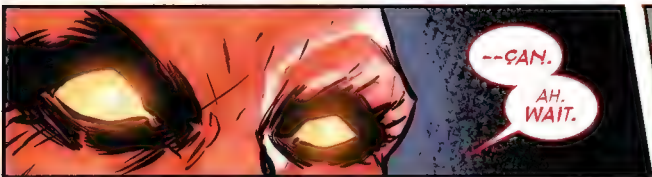
THE LOAM OF
HELL IS FERTILE
WITH THE ROT OF THOSE
WHO DARED VOW WHAT
THEY WOULD
NOT DO.

TO YOU,
YOUR MISERY IS
SOME EPIC TRAGEDY.
TO ME...IT IS A TRIFLE
TO ENLIVEN
ETERNITY.

I RUINED
YOU BECAUSE I
COULD.



AND I WILL
DESTROY YOU
BECAUSE I--



--CAN.

AH.
WAIT.



THERE IS
A GREATER
TORMENT.

PUFFFT

MAYONGA.
DEEP SPACE.



HHRRRNYAGH!

VILORTCH



I'M
ALIVE

STRUCK AS THOUGH
A BLACK HOLE HAS
FILLED HIS HEART, THE
SURFER SEES THE TRUTH.



MORE THAN
ANYTHING, HE
WISHED TO DIE.
TO BE PUNISHED
FOR HIS SINS.

I'M...
ALIVE

BUT THE DEVIL
DOES NOT GIVE
WHAT IS WANTED...
HE PREYS ON
THE WANT.

A full-page illustration of the Silver Surfer floating in space. He is a silver, humanoid figure with a large, pointed headpiece. His eyes are glowing orange, and his chest and arms have orange energy patterns. He is in a dynamic pose, with one leg raised and arms outstretched. He is riding a large, flat, silver surfboard. The background is a deep blue space filled with stars, a large planet with a blue and white atmosphere in the upper right, and several smaller asteroids or moons.

THE SILVER SURFER IS
FREE. THE SILVER SURFER
IS NO LESS A PRISONER.

HE HAS NO MANDATE
AND NO PENANCE.
ENDLESS LIFE AND
UNENDING SHAME.

HE HAS *OPEN SPACE*
AND NO WAY FORWARD.
NO WAY, BUT *ONE...* TO
ABSOLVE HIMSELF.

TO RECOUP DEED WITH
DEED, TO SAVE SOULS
WHERE HE ONCE *DAMNED*
THEM. FOR TOO LONG...

...THE SURFER FLEW IN
SERVICE TO THE DEVIL.
NOW HE WILL SERVE
NO MASTER BUT LIFE.

A close-up, high-contrast image of the Silver Surfer's face. His eyes are glowing bright orange, and his expression is stern and determined. The silver texture of his skin is visible, with some orange energy patterns around his eyes.

NOW WHEN
DEATH COMES
FOR THE
BEST OF THE
UNIVERSE...

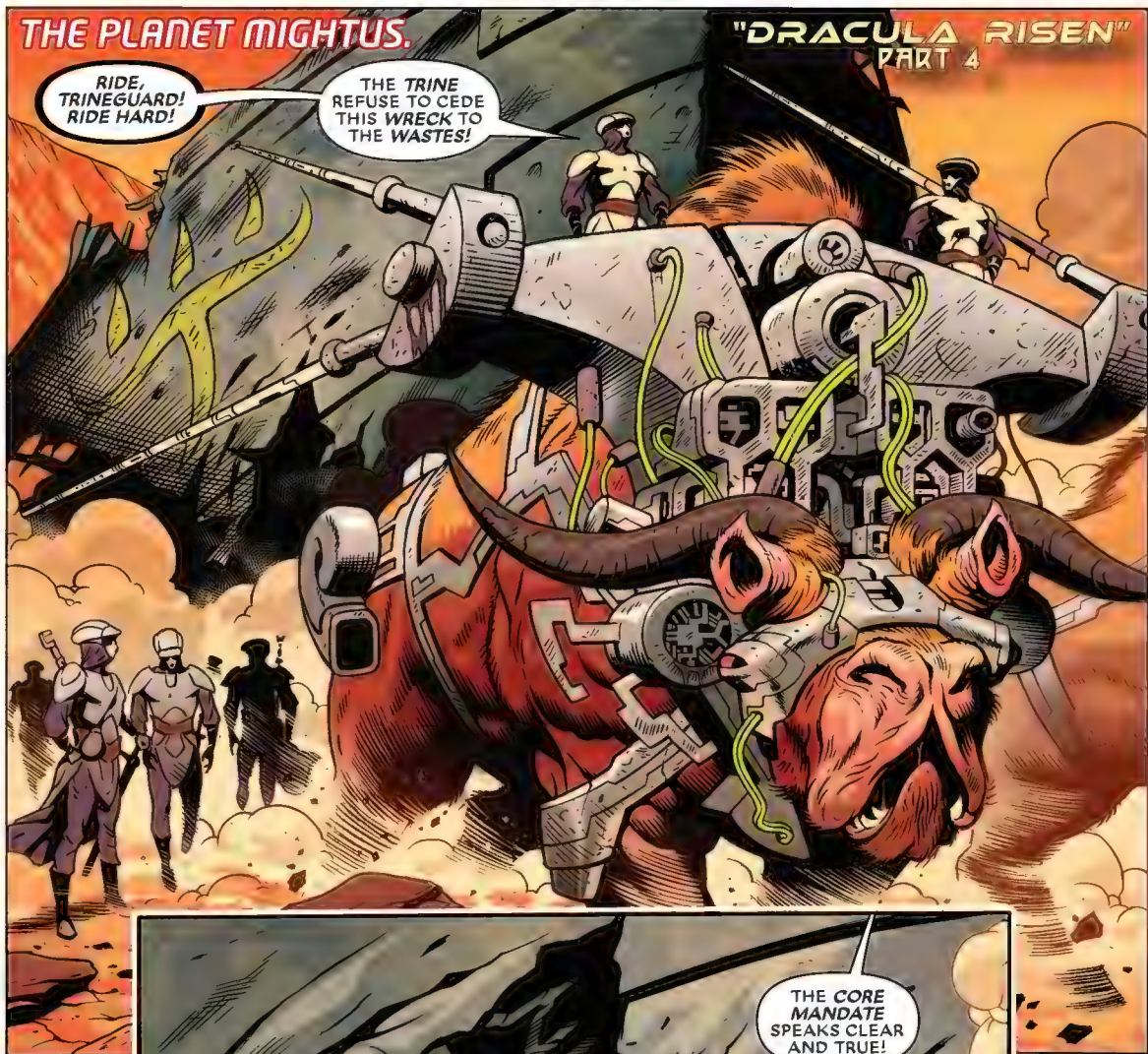
...IT WILL FIND
THE *SILVER*
SURFER
WAITING.

THE PLANET MIGHTUS.

"DRACULA RISEN" PART 4

RIDE,
TRINEGUARD!
RIDE HARD!

THE TRINE
REFUSE TO CEDE
THIS WRECK TO
THE WASTES!



THE CORE
MANDATE
SPEAKS CLEAR
AND TRUE!



THIS SAD
SALVAGE
IS OURS BY
RIGHT!



ALL THAT
FALLS FROM THE
SKY, BE IT POTCH
OR HIGH
TREASURE...



...IS
PROPERTY OF
THE MIGHTUSIAN
EMPIRE!



JONAH C. MARLO INDENTURE OF HERALDRY WITH JACK SCRATCH, A.K.A. MEPHISTO

Transcribed, Illuminated, and Personified—Nueva York, 2000 AD, Earth-Local

Document Signed, 1 Page, Medium: Word, Deed, and Soul.

THIS Indenture Witnesseth that **Jonah C. Marlo** of Nueva York, by and with his own consent, and by these Presents, doth voluntarily and of his own free Will and Accord put himself a Herald to **Mephisto** of the Hadean Underworld with him to live on and (after the Manner of a Herald) to Serve and collect Souls Indefinitely. During all which Term the said Herald his said Master faithfully shall serve, his Secrets keep, his infernal Commands gladly everywhere obey; He shall do no Damage to his said Master nor see it be done by others without letting or giving Notice to his said Master. He shall not waste his said Master's time, nor lend them unlawfully to any. He shall not commit deception, nor offer Mercy within the said Term. At forgiveness, or any other unfavorable virtues, he shall not play, whereby his said Master may have Damage with his own collected souls. In all Things as a faithful Herald, he shall behave himself to his said Master and all his during the said Term. And the said Master during the said Term shall, by the best Means or Method that he can, tolerate or cause the said Herald to be tolerated in his ongoing existence, though also shall not find and provide unto the said Herald sufficient meat, drink, or lodging. For the true Performance of all and every said Covenants and Agreements, either of the said Parties bind themselves unto the other by these Presents. In Witness whereof they have here unto interchangeably put their Hands and Seals, in the year of local Earth-realm time, anno Domini, Two Thousand and Ninety-Nine.

Accepted and Acknowledged by:

The In-Betweener
The Living Tribunal
Then

God Chaos
Goddess Witchcraft
Now



THE PLANET MIGHTUS.



LET'S GO,
GEARHEADS...
WRECK
COMING IN!

SHUN
THE SUN,
CAPT'N...



...YOU
AN' THE
TRINEGUARD
BROUGHT US
A BIG ONE!

RIGHT,
THEN! GET 'ER
INSIDE AN' SHUT
THE DAMN DOOR!
THE DRAFT N'
ALL!



COULD BE
PART OF THE
SAME WRECK WE
PULLED IN FROM
THE WASTES NOT
LONG BACK.

SCANS SHOW
ALIEN MATTER
INSIDE--YOU
GEARHEADS KNOW
THE DRILL.

KNOW
'ER WELL,
CAPT'N. STANDIN'
ORDERS.



OPEN
IT UP...

"...AND LOOK
FOR SCRAPS."

DON'T
JUST GAWK.
YOU SAID IT--
STANDING
ORDERS.

COLLECT
ANY AND ALL
ALIEN
MATTER...

...AND
DELIVER IT
TO THE DARK
ROOM FOR
STUDY.

THAT
COMES
STRAIGHT
FROM THE
TRINE.

OOF! DAMN
TRINE AIN'T MADE
GOOD ON NOTHIN'!
THEM VOWS AIN'T
BEEN KEPT...

...BEEN TOLD TOO
LONG NOW 'BOUT
FINDIN' GLORY AND
FORTUNE IN SPACE.
AN' I DON'T THINK
THIS BIT 'A CHAR'S
GONNA CHANGE
THAT.

QUIET.
IT'LL SERVE OUR
CORE MANDATE.
IT'LL HELP US TAKE
THE STARS. THIS
SAD BEAST...

...IS NOW
MIGHTUSIAN
PROPERTY.

THE TRINELANCE. CAPITAL OF MIGHTUS.

FATHER,
MOTHER...I
HAVE WALKED
AMONG THE
PEOPLE.
LISTENED, IN
DISGUISE...

...AND I
FEAR OUR
REIGN OF
PROSPERITY
MAY BE IN
JEOPARDY.

JEOPARDY?
MY DEAR,
DRAMATIC
SON...

...AS LONG
AS WE EACH
HOLD OUR PIECE
OF THE **TRIFORM
SWORD**, THE
TRINE WILL
RULE.

WE'D RULE
OVER **UNREST**,
FATHER. WHEN YOU
AND MOTHER TOOK
POWER...

...YOU VOWED
GONQUEST TO
UNITE OUR PEOPLE.
THE WORLD WAS
YOURS. BUT
SOON...

...THERE WAS
NO WORLD
HERE LEFT TO
CONQUER.
AND SO--

SO--THE
CORE MANDATE.
A SHARED DESTINY
TO CONQUER
SPACE.

OUR POWER
WILL HOLD SO
LONG AS **MIGHTUS**
CHASES THAT
DREAM.

A DREAM
YOU GAVE THEM.
BUT IT HAS BEEN
AGES WITH NO
SPACESHOT.
**QUESTIONS
ARISE.**

IF WE DO
NOT DELIVER
THE STARS SOON,
OUR **GRIPON**
MIGHTUS WILL
FALTER.

WE WILL
DELIVER. TO
DATE, ONLY THAT
FOOL **STARLORD**
HAS ESCAPED THE
DARK ROOM.

ALL OTHER
ALIEN MATTER
IS OURS TO
DISSECT. TO CUT
APART...

"...UNTIL THE SECRET
OF ITS SPACEFARING
WAYS IS REVEALED."

THE DARK ROOM.

WHAT DO
WE KNOW
ABOUT THIS
ONE SO
FAR?

THE TRINEGUARD
DREDGED IT IN FROM
THE WASTES. STRONGER
THAN THE OTHER
NEW MEAT.

IT RESISTS
ULTRAVIOLET
LIGHT, BUT ALLIUM
WEAKENS IT. GENERAL
NUTRITION DIDN'T
TAKE.

IT NEEDS
CELLULAR PLASMA
FLUID TO SURVIVE...
JUST LIKE THOSE
FOUR.

YOUR
FOOD'S KEEPING
YOU SICK, FREAK. GOT
AN ALLIUM SEDATIVE
IN YOUR PLASMA.

NEED YOU
DOCILE--WE'VE
GOT WORK TO DO.
YOU'RE FROM
SPACE, AND THE
TRINE WANTS...

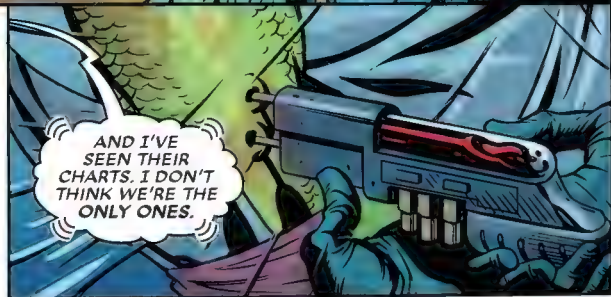
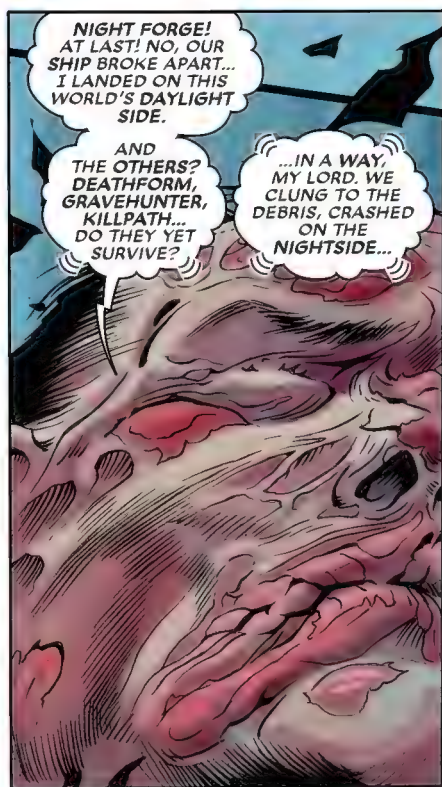
...WHAT THE
TRINE WANTS. WE
LEARN ALL WE CAN.
AND THEN? IT'S THE
INCINERATOR.

HUHHHHGN...

MY...MY
CAPTAINS...I
CALL TO YOU...FROM
THE DEPTHS OF
SUFFERING.

TELL
ME YOU LIVE...
TELL ME...

...I AM NOT
ALONE IN THIS
NEW HELL.



**DAYS LATER.
THE DARK ROOM.**

WE'VE READ
YOUR REPORTS,
DOCTOR. WE'D SPEAK
WITH THE ALIEN
MATTER ALONE.

LEAVE
US.

YES, TRINE
FATHER! THE
ROOM IS YOURS--TO
HONOR THE CORE
MANDATE!

WE ARE THE TRINE.
THE RULING FAMILY
OF MIGHTUS.

YOUR BRAIN
SCANS SHOW
ACTIVITY. WE KNOW
YOU CAN THINK. SO--
ACKNOWLEDGE
US.

AS WHAT?
MY PATHETIC
JAILERS?! YOUR
WILLS ARE WEAK--
I STOLE YOUR
LANGUAGE...

...RAIDED
YOUR MINDS THE
INSTANT WE MET EYES!
YOUR THOUGHTS
SCREAM TO ME!

YOU...
YOU SELL
YOUR PEOPLE
LIES AS DREAMS--
IT'S THEATER TO
HOLD ON TO
POWER!

I DEFEND
MY KIND--YOU
USE YOURS! YOU'RE
LOYAL ONLY TO
YOURSELVES!

YOUR SUBJECTS
WORK THEMSELVES
TO THE BONE FOR A FALSE
VICTORY THAT WILL
NEVER COME!

MIGHTUS'
RIGHT IS TO EVER
EXPAND. WE BORE
THAT IDEA...AND IT
MUST ALWAYS
BE FED.

PTOO

YOU ARE
NO LEADERS. I AM
DRACULA. YES, I HAVE
CONQUERED, EVEN
BUTCHERED...

"...BUT I DID SO TO BUILD
A NATION. TO PROTECT
MY PEOPLE. KIN...

"...WHOM I NEARLY
DIED DEFENDING FROM
A SOLAR MASSACRE.

"FOR AGES, I SLEPT. FINALLY,
I WOKE TO FIND OUR HUMAN
ATTACKERS HAD CHANGED.

"HUMANITY HAD GIVEN MY
KIND A WORLD OF THEIR
OWN. DOMUS DRAGONUM.

"A PLANET I SET OUT
TO SEE, WITH THE AID OF
A SPIDER-MAN.* BUT ALAS...

*AS SEEN IN MIGUEL O'HARA-
SPIDER-MAN 2099 #2! --MARK 2099

"...THOUGH HUMANS NOW
HONORED VAMPIRES, THE REST
OF THE UNIVERSE DID NOT.

"MY STELLAR GASKET
WAS PIRATED. I KILLED
THE CAPTAIN AND
TURNED HIS CREW...

"...BEFORE CRASHING HERE,
TO A WELCOME OF FEAR
AND DISDAIN. ALL THIS..."

"...BECAUSE
I LED FROM THE
FRONT. BECAUSE
I BLED FOR MY
PEOPLE.

YES, WELL,
ON MIGHTUS,
LEADERS BLEED
FAR LESS THAN
WHATEVER A
VAMPIRE IS.

YOU WILL SOON KNOW!
YOUR PEOPLE WILL SEE
YOU AS COWARDS AND
OPPORTUNISTS!

AND YOU
WILL BLEED
ACCORDINGLY!

SOMEONE
CERTAINLY
WILL.

AFTER ALL,
THE SECRET IN
YOUR FLESH MAY
FINALLY BRING US
SPACE TRAVEL...

...AND THAT IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR PROGRESS.

CEREBRAL FLUID EXTRACTION COMPLETE-TEST FOR PSIONIC POTENTIAL.

NYAAAAAEECH!

NIYAKAAAAEEEGH!

MYEEHHHK!

**INEPT TRASH!
DON'T WASTE YOUR
ATROCITIES ON MY
CAPTAINS! I LEAD
THEM!**

**I AM
THE STRONGEST
VAMPIRE EVER
MADE! I AM YOUR
TARGET!**

**YOU ARE,
BEAST. TRINE'S
ORDERS. YOU LIVE
AND YOU LISTEN,
POWERLESS...**

**YOU ARE,
BEAST. TRINE'S
ORDERS. YOU LIVE
AND YOU LISTEN,
POWERLESS...**

"...WHILE YOUR KIN
DIE SLOWLY. AND
AS YOU RAGE, WE
EXTRACT YOUR
ADRENALINE..."

"...FOR USE AS AN
EMERGENCY STEROID.
ONLY ONCE YOUR
CAPTAINS ARE DEAD..."

...WILL THE TRINE GRANT YOU DEATH.

KNOCK KNOCK

SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE US CLEAN THE GLASS.

**KNOCK
KNOCK**

SHOULDN'T
HAVE MADE US
CLEAN THE
GLASS.



YOU
CATTLE--THE
TRINE AREN'T
WORTH YOUR
LOYALTY!

I KNOW
THEIR MINDS--
I'VE READ THEIR
HEARTS! THIS CORE
MANDATE IS A
RUSE!

YOU ARE A
COMMODITY!
THE GREAT DESTINY
YOU WORK FOR IS
THEIRS--NOT
YOURS!

GIVE THEM
THE STARS AND
THEY WILL DEMAND
GALAXIES! YOUR
FIGHT WILL
NEVER END!



VICTORY WILL ALWAYS BE JUST
BEYOND REACH! IT IS THE CHASE
THAT KEEPS YOU IN LINE!

THEY PREY
UPON YOUR
FAITH AS THEY DO
MY FLESH!



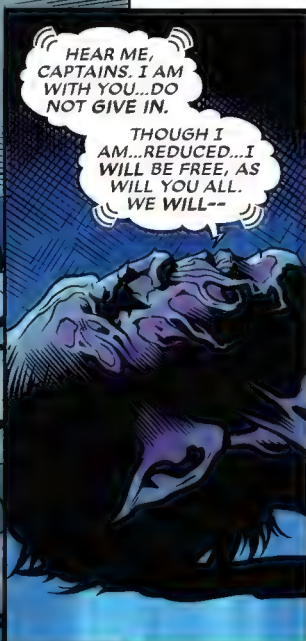
WERE IT ONLY ME WHO
SUFFERED, I WOULD
PITY YOU. BUT YOU HAVE
TORTURED MY
CAPTAINS.

AND SO, IF
YOU INSIST ON
PLAYING THE SHEEP...
YOU WILL BE
SLAUGHTERED
AS SUCH.



PLEASE, YOU'RE TOO HOPPED
UP ON ALLIUM TO LIFT A WRIST.
THE INCINERATOR'S
COMING...

...BY WEEK'S
END, WE'LL KNOW
EVERYTHING USEFUL
ABOUT YOU. THEN
IT'S COOKING
TIME.



HEAR ME,
CAPTAINS. I AM
WITH YOU...DO
NOT GIVE IN.

THOUGH I
AM...REDUCED...I
WILL BE FREE, AS
WILL YOU ALL.
WE WILL--



WAIT. WAIT...
IT IS AS YOU
SAID.

WE
ARE NOT THIS
DUNGEON'S SOLE
PRISONERS...

...THERE IS
ANOTHER, FAR
BELOW.

A GREAT
CREATURE OF
THE STARS, NATIVE
TO THE SHADOWY
VOID.

A DARKHAWK.
THIS...THIS IS A CHILD
OF COSMIC NIGHT,
MY CAPTAINS.

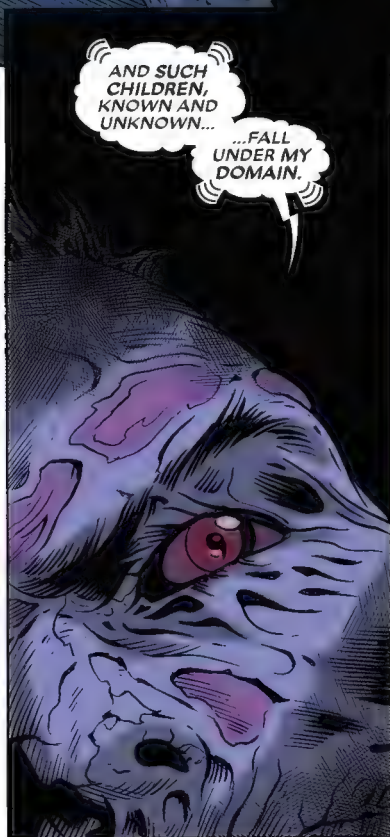


AND SUCH
CHILDREN,
KNOWN AND
UNKNOWN...

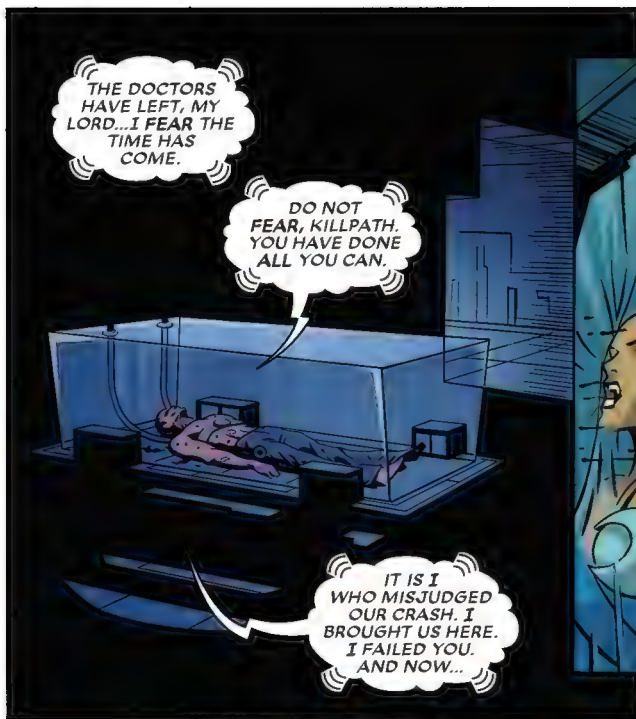
...FALL
UNDER MY
DOMAIN.

SOON, WE
WILL ALL FLY
FREE.

SOON, WE
WILL MAKE THIS
WORLD FEAR THE
DARK...



...BUT
NOT WITHOUT
GREAT PAIN.



THE DOCTORS
HAVE LEFT, MY
LORD...I FEAR THE
TIME HAS
COME.

DO NOT
FEAR, KILLPATH.
YOU HAVE DONE
ALL YOU CAN.

IT IS I
WHO MISJUDGED
OUR CRASH. I
BROUGHT US HERE.
I FAILED YOU.
AND NOW...



...IT IS I
WHO MUST
ASK EVEN MORE
OF YOU.

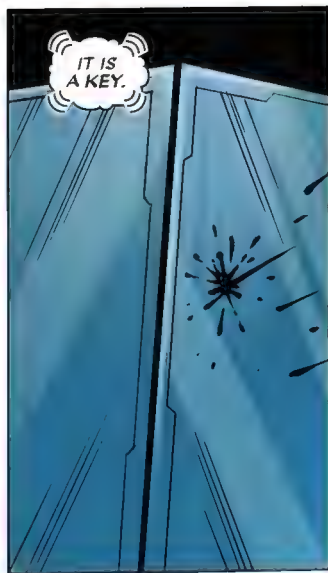
BUT YOU
HAVE MY WORD--
THOUGH I PULL FROM
YOU ALL BUT YOUR
LAST DROP...



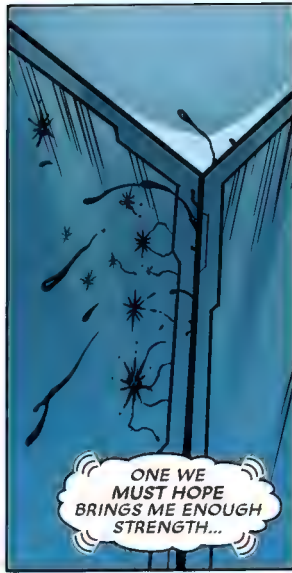
...THOUGH
YOU WILL TEETER
ON THE EDGE OF
OBLIVION...



...THE BLOOD
YOU OFFER WILL
NOT BE OFFERED
IN VAIN.



IT IS
A KEY.



ONE WE
MUST HOPE
BRINGS ME ENOUGH
STRENGTH...



...TO REWARD
YOUR FAITH WITH
A FEAST.

HOURS LATER.

WHAT IS--
WHERE THE HELL
IS THE ALIEN
MATTER?!

WE--BUT WE LOCKED
THE ANALYCELL! IT'S
STILL SEALED--
THIS CAN'T BE!

THE
UR-GLASS IS
IMPREGNABLE!
HOW COULD HE
ESCAPE?!

LAB ONE?
THIS IS LAB
THREE...

...SOMETHING'S
HAPPENED TO OUR
MEAT TOO...

...THEIR
CELLULAR FLUID
HAS BEEN DRAINED,
LAB ONE. THEY'RE
DEAD.

THIS DRACULA
IS MIGHTIER THAN
WE KNEW. PERHAPS
THIS ISN'T A
FAILURE AT
ALL.

HE'S
REVEALED
HIDDEN GENETIC
ASSETS TO OFFER
MIGHTUS. HE WILL
BE FOUND.

THEN,
THESE...NEW
TALENTS WILL
BE WEAPONIZED.
NOTIFY THE
TRINE.

OH, THE
TRINE WILL
KNOW. OF THAT,
YOU CAN BE
SURE.

BUT WHY
RUSH SUCH
EXCITEMENT?



THE
LIBERATION
HAS JUST
BEGUN!



CHOK



RUN!

RRRIIPT

HE'S STILL
IN THE CELL!
HE'S--



SICK OF
HIS CAGE! AS
ARE HIS CAPTAINS.
PRISONERS...WHO
WILL HUNGER NO
LONGER.



YOUR
BLOOD WAS A
BOON, CAPTAINS--
FUEL ENOUGH TO
BREAK THESE
FRAIL MINDS.

ENOUGH TO
HIDE MYSELF,
TO LURE THEM
CLOSE...AND
BEGIN THE TRUE
ESCAPE.



YOUR SACRIFICE
MUST BE REWARDED.
YOU WERE STARVED--
BUT NO LONGER.

SLEKT



GORGE
YOURSELVES ON
YOUR OPPRESSORS...
ON THIS WORLD.

REAP BLOOD
AND ENTRAILS
IN OUR NAMES.
I WILL JOIN
YOU...



...ONCE THE
FINAL CHAINS
HAVE BEEN
BROKEN.

I AM SORRY
FOR WHAT THEY
DID TO YOU, MY
FRIEND.
SORRY A
CREATURE OF
SUCH BEAUTY HAS
BEEN TORMENTED
IN THE DARK.



BUT YOUR
TRIAL IS AT
AN END.
AND AFTER
A BRIEF MOMENT OF
TRANSFORMATIONAL
PAIN...

CHOMP!





...OF THE
DARKHAWK
UNLEASHED!

BR A K A K O P M



NOW FLY,
MY CAPTAINS!
WELCOME THE
NIGHT'S
EMBRACE!

WE ARE
THE FIRST VAMPIRES
MIGHTUS HAS EVER
KNOWN! THE BURDEN
FALLS TO US...



"...TO LEAVE
A LASTING
IMPRESSION.

"THE SOLDIERS, THE
CITIZENS...THE CHILDREN. ALL
HAVE AGONY TO PAY FOR.



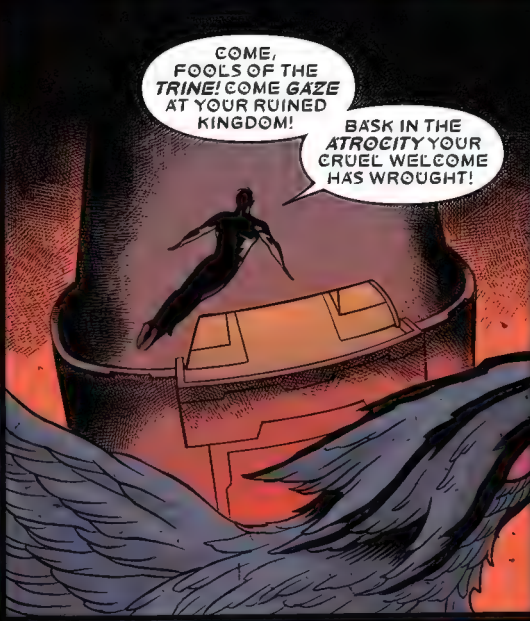
"BUT THE TRINE...THIS
IGNOBLE WORLD'S
RULING FAMILY...

"...CREATORS OF THE
CORE MANDATE THAT
JUSTIFIED OUR PAIN..."



"...I WILL
VISIT WRATH
UPON THEM MYSELF.
AFTER ALL, I MADE
A PROMISE.

AND A
TRUE LEADER
HOLDS TO HIS
WORD.



COME,
FOOLS OF THE
TRINE! COME GAZE
AT YOUR RUINED
KINGDOM!

BASK IN THE
ATROCITY YOUR
CRUEL WELCOME
HAS WROUGHT!



ATROCITY?

YOU
CRASHED ON
OUR WORLD...



...ALL THAT
FELL WITH YOU IS
OURS BY RIGHT.

OURSTO
EXPLOIT! TO TAKE
TO THE STARS FOR
THE GLORY OF
MIGHTUS!

YOU ARE NO
VICTIM, DRACULA!
YOU ARE A RESOURCE!
YOUR UPRISING IS
NOTHING!



BUT IF YOU
INSIST ON A
PREMATURE
DEATH...

...WE WILL
DRAW WHAT
WISDOM
WE CAN FROM
YOUR
CORPSE!



I THINK
NOT.

NGUH,
WH-WHAT?
WHAT HAVE
YOU--

CONQUERED
YOUR MINDS,
CHILD. IT IS AS
APPROPRIATE
AS IT IS
POETIC.



KNEEL.

GHHHA,
NO! YOU
CAN'T! YOU
CAN'T...

CRUNCH



I CAN,
TRINE FATHER.
I AM NO LONGER
YOUR STARVED
DOG. I AM THE
NIGHT. I AM
DRACULA.

I AM
VAMPIRE...



...SHALL WE EXPLORE THAT CONCEPT TOGETHER?

WE ARE VAMPIRE. AND SO, WHEN PROVOKED...



"...WE BECOME PESTILENCE."

"A RAZOR WIND CUTTING THROUGH YOUR PEOPLE LIKE NATURE ITSELF."



WE ARE VAMPIRE. AND SO, HAVING SLAUGHTERED THOSE WHO ABUSED US...

...WE BLESS OUR PREY WITH THE DARK GIFT.



"WE MAKE OUR KIND OUT OF YOUR KIND. WE TAKE YOUR ARMY AS OUR OWN."



I AM VAMPIRE. AND SO--I PLUCK THE MEANING OF THESE BLADES FROM YOUR HEAD.

THE TRIFORM SWORD IS THE SYMBOL OF MIGHTUS'S RULERS. WHOEVER HOLDS IT HOLDS THIS ENTIRE WORLD IN THEIR GRASP. A WORLD... THAT IS NO LONGER YOURS.



ALL THAT WAS YOURS IS NOW MINE. AND ALL THAT IS MINE...

...NOW HUNGERS FOR YOUR THROATS.

YOU ARE MIGHTUS' LAST MEAL. AND ONCE MY ARMY HAS FED?

THE VAMPIRE HOMELAND BECKONS...



...AND
CONQUEST
CALLS!

NEXT:
DRACULA AGAINST ALL...IN
CONQUEST 2099!

PREMIER'S QUICKLOG - LILITH DRACULA, F.K.A. LILITH DRAKE

CLASSIFICATION: Private. Encryption: Hereditary (Key Blood Code to Unlock)

ENTRY 1

For years, I fought my kind, fought my own father, on behalf of the greater good. But for all my victories on their behalf, humanity committed an act worse than vampires had committed against them. Their orbital solar attack would've eradicated us, if not for the very man I'd spent my life fighting, if not for Vlad Dracula, my father. The horror of the attack galvanized Earth. Finally, confronted with their own hate, enough of them changed. What vampires who lived were offered an entire new world as recompense for the attack. And for this, the greatest corporations worked to solve the thirst for blood that for so long rendered us so fearful. A nanotech treatment, one based off the serum once used to satiate the vampire Blade, was created. We've been given a fleet, as well. And once we reach the new world we've scouted, the thirst will be no more. Domus Draconum, once founded, will be a world where the rivers and oceans run with blood. We will build beyond the thirst at last. As I negotiated on behalf of vampiroidkind, it's me who's been elected as our first premier.

ENTRY 31

Landing went smoothly enough. Only minor injuries were incurred, and the planet was found to hold no higher functioning life, just as long-range scans predicted. With our rations depleted, we moved quickly to deploy the nanotech infusion into the planet's water ways. In less than a local day, the planet's seas turned from starving blue to nourishing red. Domus Draconum was born.

ENTRY 113

Today, Domus Draconum's first permanent structure was erected. After local months of revelry, overcome with an abundance of blood as we've never known, we first explored our world by way of a nomadic trek. But now our capital has taken root.

ENTRY 199

Tomorrow will mark the first meeting of Domus Draconum's government. I was again elected premier, say, to be in sight by a cadre of elected thought leaders. Thanks to the Hades from our telepathic connection, we have granted universal vampire suffrage.

ENTRY 113

As if to mark the end of our first local year on Domus Draconum, the first vampire child native to this world was born today. They will experience nothing of our former plight. They and everyone to come will be reared in nightfutures, educated in vampire schools and lead the first generation of unchained, unbridled vampire innovation.

ENTRY 300

The longer I sit in leadership, the more I begin to understand my father's cruel ways. Though I do not share his mission, I finally understand his passion for protecting our people, with every blood we make, I become more indebted for the privilege of leadership. And with every new day, I become more avowed to defend our progress at any cost. Once, I wished him dead. Now I have taken his name, Lilith Dracula. One day, I hope, soon, he will rise from his healing sleep on Earth's moon. And I'll have such victories to share with him.

RED HULK CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

When we were first brainstorming characters for **ANNIHILATION 2099**, there were obvious cosmic choices like **Nova**, **Quasar**, **Star-Lord** and **Silver Surfer**, but we wanted to throw in a wild card. I pitched writer Steve Orlando **Red Hulk**, and he was game. We'd do something that hearkened to the original **INCREDIBLE HULK** by Stan and Jack, something that would pay tribute in spirit to that first great superhero monster story. When we approached Pete, I gave him the general outline to the story. He came back --and this is the genius of Pete Woods--with an incredible idea of his own. "What if when Ross is 'healed' by Ego's glands, the healing factor (for lack of a better term) doesn't make a distinction between the organic Ross parts and the technological suit parts so the Red Hulk is actually a techno-organic being melding suit, man and monster god. Think Kirby and Giger collaborating on a Red Hulk design." This was his first stab, which he only showed me just before we went to press. It's monstrous and powerful and I certainly wouldn't want to be a planet in his way while doing a hyperspace jump!



Original rough draft by Pete.



HULK 2099

THE IDEA IS THAT SUIT & HULK ARE MERGED

AN ARTIST CAN DRAW THE SIMPLER KIRBYESQUE DESIGN FROM A DISTANCE BUT WHEN WE ZOOM IN WE PICK UP ON THE CREEPY GIGER-LIKE DETAILS

RED HULK CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

The first draft he shared was damn near perfect. But as I have a thing for Hulks with gladiator helmets or Mohawks, I asked to see a version with a head fin. Cool but ended up looking a little too Elvis for me, but Pete liked the idea and wanted to make it work as he thought the approach could give Red Hulk a monstrous dinosaur vibe. He came back with a sleeker version that flared when Red Hulk was in battle mode. Now it was perfect!

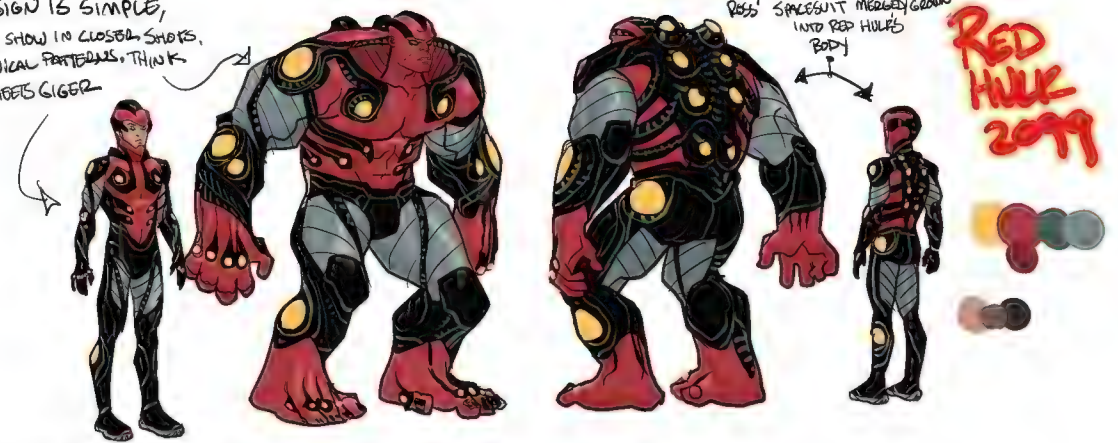
The best part? Pete liked the character so much he said yes when I asked him to draw the issue! It doesn't get any better than this for a comic-book editor!

--Mark Paniccia

DESIGN IS SIMPLE,
DETAILS SHOW IN CLOSE-UPS.
BIOTECHNICAL PATTERNS, THINK
KIRBY MEETS GIGER

ROSS' SPACESUIT MERGED/GROWN
INTO RED HULK'S
BODY

RED
HULK
2019

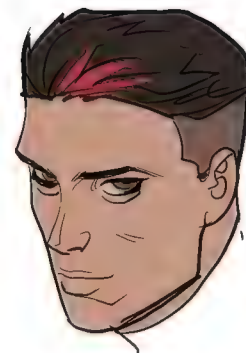


SPIKES RAISE ALL
DOWN SPINE WHEN ENGAGED



WIRES/CABLES
WOVEN THRU
SKIN/MUSCLE

ONE MAN
SUPER-UMMAH
CANNONBALL SPECIAL
WILL RUIN YOUR
DAY



THE LAST NOVA COSTUME DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS



Hey, 2099ers! Editor Mark Paniccia here!

Pete Woods (who also did the **ANNIHILATION 2099** Homage Variants along with the incredible interiors for the **RED HULK** Annihilation issue) did such a fantastic job on the designs for the main characters of this series that I just had to show them off!

Nova was a bit tricky because I wanted his silhouette to invoke Wolverine's without being too obvious on covers or in promo images. I wanted readers to make that discovery in the story. I asked Pete if he could skew toward John Buscema as an inspiration--that beefy and wider body type John did for some of his characters, particularly Logan. Costume-wise we wanted that iconic helmet shape and color scheme but with a Western/lone-cowboy vibe.

Pete's first stab (pun intended) at the design had a cool long coat that invoked a Union soldier. I really dug it, but the consensus was it wouldn't be practical in hand-to-hand combat. We also skewed toward Frank Quitely's **NEW X-MEN** design for the boots with thick, chunky soles.

Taking into consideration the backstory Steve wrote on the character and the tone of the story, Pete brought thoughtful elements to the table, like referencing an X motif and the mechanics of the Nova guns. The final result of blending the aesthetics of Nova and Logan turned out to be a stunning success!



NOVA SHOULD LOOK WELL WORN - DUSTY, DIRTY, AND SCRATCHED UP

STARLORD

COSTUME DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

For **STARLORD**, Steve imagined a woman of Wakandan and Mexican heritage, who survived a planetary disaster from an exploding sun during her youth. From that great tragedy, she took the path of a hero and created technologies that allow her access across the universe to become a true protector of stars. She has hundreds of orbital guard posts connected by folded-space doorways. With this Starpath, she can get to a stellar emergency in seconds.

We wanted to invoke the kind of power **CAPTAIN MARVEL** and **THOR** have, a figure who can go toe-to-toe with a god if need be. Her Starhammer, forged on Wakanda, can absorb energy, redirect it, or release it against whatever threat she faces.

Pete did a lot of versions, and we settled on the purple color scheme, adding stars to the black parts of the uniform to create a costume that's inspired by classic cosmic heroes who have come before her while still having a modern flare!

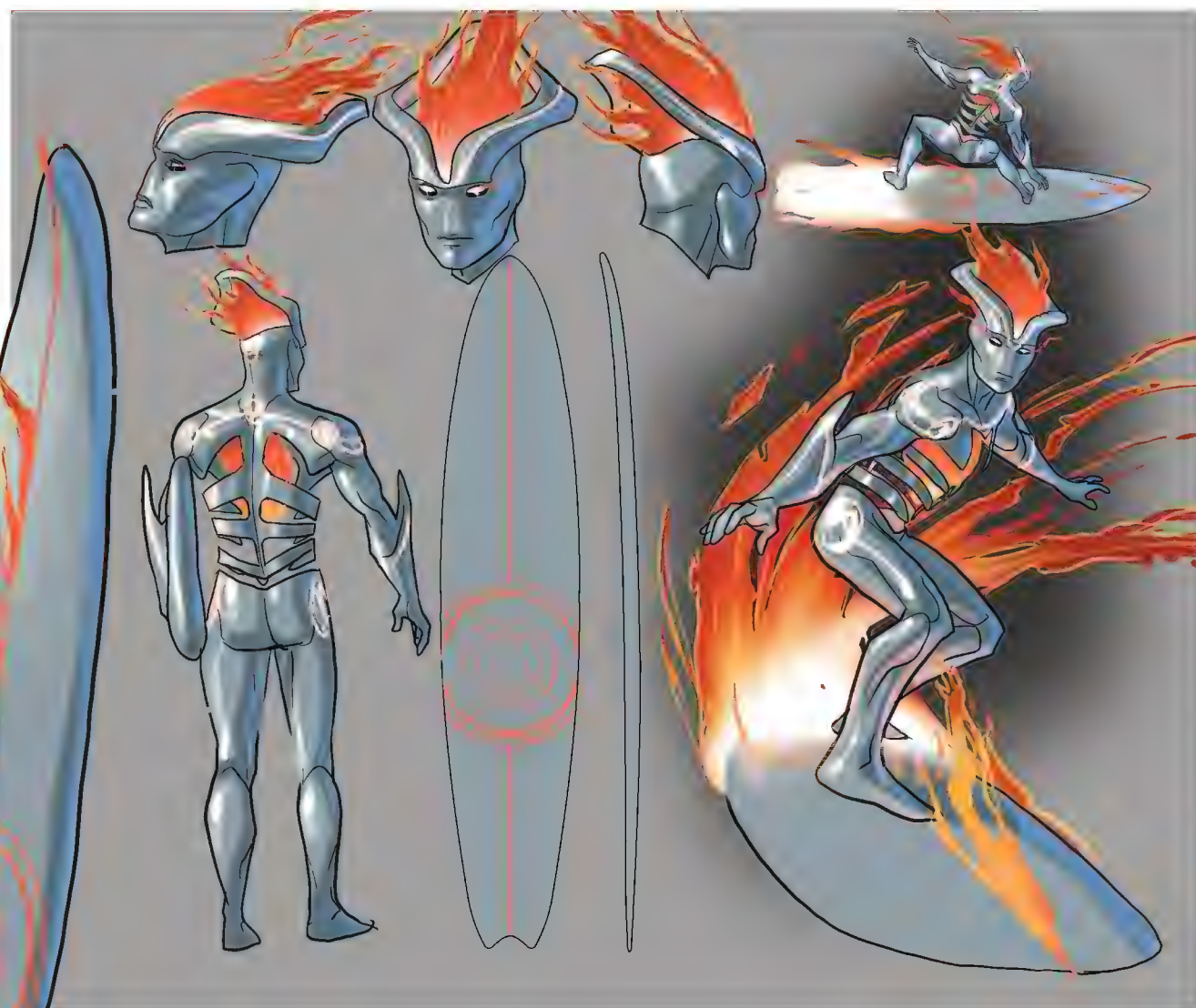
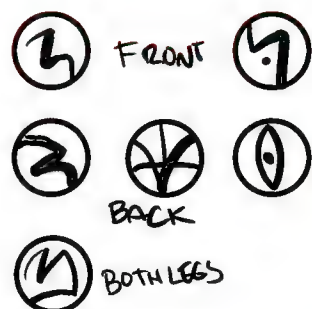


SILVER SURFER 2099 CHARACTER DESIGN

BY PETE WOODS

Out of all the designs that Pete did for **ANNIHILATION 2099**, none were as twisted and haunting as that of **Silver Surfer 2099**. I sent him Steve's initial summary and character origin. Because of Jonah Marlo's Faustian bargain with **Mephisto**, I joked we might as well call him the "Sulfur Surfer" or even "Satan's Surfer." What Pete came back with was mind-blowing.

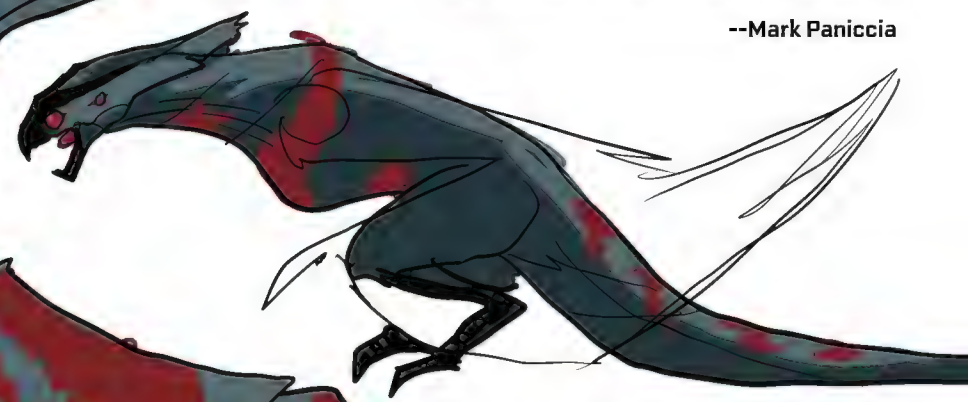
Surfer's body is essentially a cage for his soul. We can see that clearly as his center torso is gone--the "ribs" forming almost a cage around the pale glowing orb that is his soul. The silver is enchanted metal with binding runes etched in the surface, and his head sports symbolic hornlike structures (or is it a halo?), signifying Mephisto's hand in his fate. The board is also etched with binding runes that link him to it.



The design was disturbing to say the least but...very cool! We loved the caged-soul idea. It was a brilliant concept, and the blue orb inside the rib cage made sense, especially for a character doomed to surf in the lonely cold of space. Steve and I were sold, but we, along with Pete, wanted to try one more version. This time with fire in the runes and a soul that was molten red.

The revision came back. Surfer now had red flames! Pete felt it would give tons of dramatic potential to cover art, and he was right. As demonstrated by his homage variant cover (if you were lucky enough to get it), Pete's new and shocking interpretation of the character preserved the theme of the power and great sorrow of the original Silver Surfer. A new 2099 Surfer had been born!

--Mark Paniccia



THINK BATWING WITH
FEATHERS

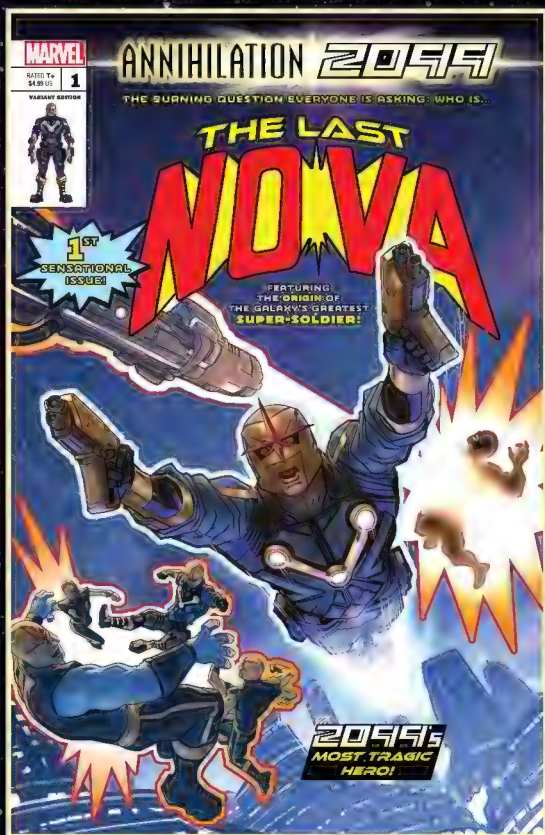
When we first added **Dracula** to the 2099 roster in **MIGUEL O'HARA — SPIDER-MAN 2099: BEWARE**, we thought it was cool and novel using a design that evoke the old '70s **TOMB OF DRACULA** version (and it was!). But when writer Steve Orlando sent him out into space in search of the new vampire homeworld at the end of the issue, it became apparent we had a big story that needed to be followed up on: What happens when Dracula goes cosmic?

The next 2099 projects were approved shortly after **BEWARE**. **ANNIHILATION** and **CONQUEST** were put on the docket, and we decided that Drac would have to be the big bad. We needed a new design that would ensure the Lord of the Vampires looked every bit as imposing and formidable as an intergalactic conqueror should. It had to evoke his classic roots while giving him an edge befitting of the 2099 era. Pete maintained the Count's signature cape with red lining but gave him armor with an aura of dark divinity.

But what's a conqueror with armor and a cape without a cool sword? Steve had the idea of an interlocking triple sword made from the blades of the three rulers of the planet Drac would conquer. Pete got it on the first try. And he also designed the new **Darkhawk 2099**, a powerful creature that will be an indispensable ally in Dracula's grand schemes.

We couldn't be more thrilled with Pete's final version. This Dracula is primed to leave an indelible mark as he prepares to unleash a vampiric apocalypse across the cosmos!

--Mark Paniccia



#1 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS



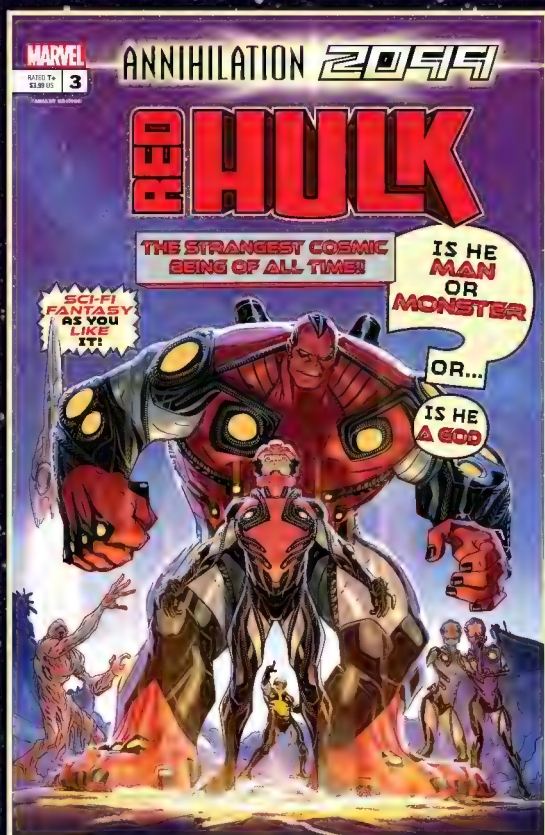
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KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ



#2 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS



#2 2099 FRAME VARIANT BY
KEN LASHLEY & JUAN FERNANDEZ



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PETE WOODS



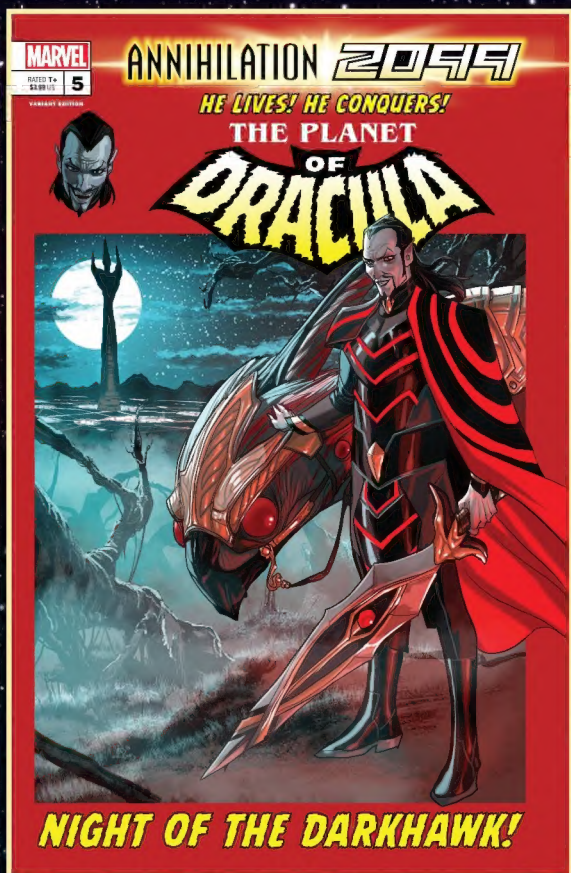
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#4 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS



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#5 FIRST APPEARANCE VARIANT BY
PETE WOODS



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MEET THE COSMIC HEROES OF THE YEAR 2099!

When a remote town on a far-off world is devastated by the ravenous, unforgiving **KNULL SET**, a gang of raiders and thieves obsessed with offering up all life to the darkness, a stranger arrives from the stars who answers to his own code. The sole survivor of **XANDAR** — the last **NOVA**! Wakandan tech goddess **STARLORD** guards the solar systems from villains like **QUASAR**, **THE LIVING STAR**! Ross Romero is the all-new **RED HULK**, whose cosmic strength and hyperspace jumps are fueled by the power primordial! Will that be enough to defeat **TERRAX**, **THE PLANET HUNTER**? A Faustian pact means Jonah Marlo must collect souls for his master as the **SILVER SURFER** of 2099! Plus: When **DRACULA** finds himself held captive on a hostile world, he encounters a **DARKHAWK**. They will need to team up to fight their oppressors, but is Dracula fighting to liberate the planet or to make it the first outpost in his new empire?

Collecting **ANNIHILATION 2099 #1-5** — by Steve Orlando, Ibraim Roberson, Dale Eaglesham, José Luis Soares, Pete Woods, Arió Anindito, Oren Junior, Neeraj Menón, Raúl Angulo and Jay David Ramos.

T+

MARVEL